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*James Luce.*

*328*











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LETTERS,  
ADDRESSED  
TO THE DAUGHTER  
OF  
A NOBLEMAN,

ON THE  
*FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL  
PRINCIPLE.*

---

By ELIZABETH HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF  
"LETTERS ON THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF  
EDUCATION," &c. &c. &c.

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*THE THIRD EDITION.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## P R E F A C E.

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**I**N submitting the ensuing pages to the ordeal of criticism, the author has no hopes of their passing unscorched through its tremendous flames: nor is she weak enough to expect that any thing she can urge will induce her judges to temper for her the heat of the burning ploughshare. Were she not provided with a talisman, of which she has in many instances proved the efficacy, she would shrink hopeless from the trial; but confident that upon this occasion it will not be found to have lost any of its virtue, she



binds it to her bosom, and proceeds, if not without apprehension, at least without dismay.

It is, indeed, only on the generous and candid, that the talisman of *good intentions* can exert its friendly influence ; but it is the approbation of such minds alone, that she feels any solicitude to secure. Of such minds she is anxious to conciliate the esteem, and would spare no pains to purchase their dignified support — their unequivocal suffrage. In order to render her plea availing, she thinks it may be expedient to say a few words in explanation of the motives which induced her to write, and which led her to publish the letters of which these volumes are composed. The motives are extremely simple. She wrote to gratify her feelings, by keeping up this species of intercourse with a family of amiable children, to whose interests she had  
for

for some time devoted her sole attention; and who had greatly endeared themselves to her affections. A hope that she might even in absence continue to be of use to them, induced her to attempt making a fair and striking delineation of those objects to which she had endeavoured imperceptibly to lead their infant steps. The task was delicate as well as difficult. In order to avoid all interference with the peculiar opinions, or accidental prejudices of those, with whom it might be their lot to live, she endeavoured to keep as much as possible to general views; but as the mind must have made considerable progress before it is capable of embracing these, she found it necessary so to manage the chain of argument, as to give interest and importance to every separate link. In this she has not succeeded to her own satisfaction, and cannot hope that others

will be more easily satisfied ; yet still trusts that candour will make some allowance for the peculiar difficulties by which she was embarrassed.

It must be confessed, that whatever consideration may be given to the circumstances under which a book is written, by those who take a peculiar interest in the writer, it is only to the friends of the individual that they can with propriety be offered as an apology for any apparent defect. With the public, an author has, or ought to have, no other existence than as an author. On the present occasion, no other circumstances than those that are connected with such existence, shall therefore be brought forward.

To the writer of the Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, so much indulgence has been hitherto shewn as to encourage her to hope, that in mentioning that work as the origi-

originating cause of the present, she will do no injury to its interest.

Concerning the truth of the principles upon which that book was written, no doubt had ever crossed her mind : but her reliance upon her own judgment has never had sufficient force to render her indifferent to the opinion of her superiors in wisdom and information. By the approbation of those best qualified to decide, her judgment was confirmed. Still, however, an opportunity was wanting for observing the consequences of a practical application of the principles she had endeavoured to unfold. When least expected that opportunity was presented, and presented under circumstances so peculiarly interesting, as promised an ample recompence for every sacrifice which her enthusiasm in the cause of education rendered her willing to make. Nor were her expectations

tations disappointed — for she has now the satisfaction of being able to speak with confidence of the inestimable advantages that result from a strict attention to the early development of the infant faculties. She can now from experience enforce her confirmed opinion of the influence of early association, in forming the disposition and character ; and from experience likewise, can assure the timid and the doubtful, that the trouble of watching over these associations, sinks into nothing, when placed in comparison with the delight of which it opens a never-failing source. The more her opportunities of observation have been enlarged, the more thoroughly is she persuaded, that the lessons which are given in the common routine of education, give little either of exercise or improvement to any faculty excepting memory : and

that it is only in as far as it excites the mind to a vigorous exercise of all its various powers, that education will produce any salutary or permanent effect. To a task which requires such unwearied attention, she believes none to be competent, but those who are stimulated to the undertaking by such a disinterested zeal to promote the happiness of its objects, as will render every advance they make, a source of heart-felt satisfaction : a satisfaction not merely of that quiescent nature, which arises from the pleasure of success—but a satisfaction strong and vivid, and brightly illumined by the rays of hope.

Some idea of self mingles with the best of actions. Some notion of reward, either in this world or the next, however unconscious we may be of entertaining it, will, upon examination, be found to have given life to

every virtuous exertion. While the mother, or the friend who with maternal affection performs a mother's duties, observes with rapture the progress that is daily making towards the formation of that perfect character, which had been delineated in her sanguine mind; — she looks forward, and beholds the darling object of her present cares, the support and comfort of her declining years; and anticipates in the sweet return of gratitude, an ample reward for all the anxieties of affection.

“ Soon as the playful innocent can prove  
 A tear of pity or a smile of love,  
 Or cons his murm'ring task beneath her care,  
 Or lisps with holy look his ev'ning prayer,  
 Or gazing mutely pensive, sits to hear  
 The mournful ballad warbled in his ear;  
 Now fondly looks, admiring *Hope* the while,  
*At every artless tear, and every smile.*

PLEASURES OF HOPE.

The

The assistant of her labours is placed under circumstances widely different. She engages herself for a certain limited period to the performance of certain stipulated duties, to be paid for at a stipulated price. With whatever fidelity she may discharge her obligation, whatever pleasure she may derive from the consciousness of having amply discharged it, she looks not to the future character for her reward, for on the glory of the future character, she knows she is not destined to participate. From the degree in which the mechanical accomplishments have been acquired, she may reap advantage, as a recommendation of her abilities and skill : but in the virtues of the heart, she has no further interest, than such as a virtuous mind must ever take in promoting the cause of virtue. Her principles may lead her to sow the  
I seeds ;



seeds; but of the harvest of her labours she expects not to partake. Her hopes and her feelings are bounded to the present. Her cares, like those of the parents of the feathered race, cease with their flight into the world. The nestlings, in the beautiful language of the poet,

“ Demand the free possession of the sky,—  
“ ————— The surging air receives  
“ Its plummy burden. — Their self-taught wings  
“ Winnow the warring element. —  
“ Till vanished every fear; and every power  
“ Roused into life, and action; high in air  
“ The acquitted parents see their soaring race,  
“ *And once rejoicing, never know them more.*”

From views that are necessarily circumscribed within the narrow limits of the period of early youth, it is not surprising that all that is most essential to the future conduct, should in so many instances appear to have been excluded.

The

The views of parents may, it is true, be still more narrow and confined; but they are not *necessarily* so. If parents look not beyond the present moment, if the real interests and future happiness of their children occupies no place in their thoughts, they will doubtless leave the formation of their characters to chance,—but they will do it at the risk of having their own future hours embittered by many a heartfelt sorrow.

Parents may become careless or indifferent; but they never can be divested of all interest in the conduct of their offspring. That conduct must, even to the close of their existence, have power to kindle the glow of satisfaction or the blush of shame! Were parents to anticipate these sensations, as the certain result of the degree in which they had attended to the impressions made upon the infant mind,

mind, they would require no exhortations to attention. In a regard to their own happiness they would have an incentive sufficiently powerful to animate them to every necessary exertion.

Minds susceptible of the ardent feelings of friendship and affection, may become little less interested in the welfare of an adopted family, than if bound by the parental tie : but to such minds the fascinating endearments of infant innocence ; the hopes inspired by the progressive expansion of the infant heart and understanding ; and the delight arising from anticipated views of the future character ; may eventually prove sources of the keenest misery ; as, should circumstances ever throw them to a distance from the objects of their tenderness, every hope that had been cherished, every care that had awakened vigilance,

lance, and every little circumstance that had called forth the fondness of the heart, will give additional poignancy to the pang of separation.

From whatever point the subject is viewed, the author perceives additional reason to enforce a consideration of the advantages that are certainly to be derived from a regular and early cultivation of the faculties of the mind, and the affections of the heart. She believes that were their cultivation to become a chief object of attention, there would, in the next generation, be little necessity for exhorting those who have a certain and unalienable interest in the future conduct of children, to take upon themselves a principal share in their instruction.

To those who really wish to perform this momentous duty, no hint that can be given upon the formation  
of

of religious and moral principle will be given in vain. A hope that the ensuing Letters might afford some degree of assistance in these important points, was a chief incitement to their publication. To the young, indeed, they are addressed, and to young minds that have been prepared by previous instruction for their perusal, the author flatters herself they may prove salutary — she assures herself they will at least prove safe.

As it was her aim to give a general and comprehensive view of the important truths which have been conveyed to us by Divine revelation, she did not think it necessary to have recourse to other authority than the Bible for any thing that she advanced. She is not perfectly unapprised of the risk she may hereby have incurred. She knows there are those who consider every book in which they do not perceive

perceive the names of their favourite authors, as of doubtful tendency ; who deem every one who is not declaredly of their party, as a certain enemy to all the doctrines which their party has most zealously espoused ; and all who oppose its doctrines as in a state of utter reprobation. By such she will probably be at all events condemned. But as she would not willingly incur the disapprobation of any worthy person, she does not scruple to advance the plea of ignorance in mitigation of her offence. Of controversial theology she confesses herself to be deplorably ignorant, and despairs of ever being otherwise than ignorant ; as, were she ever so much inclined to enter upon the study, she is too deficient in scholastic lore, to have any hopes of being able to pursue it, so as to become perfect mistress of all that has been said on both sides of  
of

of every question. Without such a degree of information, she should consider herself guilty of presumption and arrogance, were she to pretend to judge.

The opinions that are called orthodox, when rendered plain by being stripped of all technical phraseology, she finds in general exactly conformable to her own; but she embraces them, not because they are sanctioned by particular names, but because they seem to her to be consonant to Scripture. To the service of the church of England she for the same reason adheres, and would so adhere, whether it were proved or disproved that Calvin or his friends had a hand in composing it. But while she thus adheres to the church, she cannot, for the aforementioned reasons, think it incumbent upon her in her present state of ignorance, to enter the lists as its champion,

pion, and to hurl defiance upon all who think they may be saved though they come not within its pale. Let those who have power for the contest, arm themselves for the combat; she has been taught to consider her sex as precluded from the field of strife. Nor is a sense of propriety the only motive that deters her from engaging in a war of controversy. Doubts concerning the consequences which such warfare might have upon her own mind, and upon the minds of others, would at all events impose restraint. From all she has observed, it appears to her, that, with whatever temper abstract propositions may be maintained by those who thoroughly understand them; they are seldom supported by those who have not that advantage, without some violence to the spirit of charity. The propositions may be just and true; but the zeal that violates



violates charity converts them into means of inflaming the pride and animosity of party. If the time ever arrives in which it shall be made clear to her that the spirit of party tends to advance the interests of religion, the spirit of party it will then become her duty to acquire. While her conviction leads to an opposite conclusion, no friendship for the individuals of which any party is composed ; no respect for the talents, or the learning, or the worth of any who arrange themselves beneath its banners, will lead her to assume its badge. Her earnest wish is to see all Christians join in anxious endeavours to spread the knowledge and the spirit of the Gospel. Whoever labours in this vineyard ought not to look to the praise of **their fellow-labourers**, but to the Master **of** the vineyard for their reward. If the following little work

is

is acceptable in his sight, it will have been accepted as a labour of love. It interferes with no one's opinions; it clashes with no one's interests. It may be described in the words of the celebrated Bishop of Down and Connor in his epistle dedicatory to the sermons preached at the Golden Grove.

“ The special design of the whole  
 “ is to describe the greater lines of  
 “ duty by special arguments; and if  
 “ any witty censurer shall observe  
 “ that I tell him nothing but what  
 “ he knew before, I shall be con-  
 “ tented with it, and rejoice that he  
 “ was so well instructed; and wish  
 “ also that he needed not a *remem-*  
 “ *brancer* : — and that I profess not  
 “ to make curious inquiries after NEW  
 “ NOTHINGS, but pursuances of OLD  
 “ TRUTHS.”

CON-



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## LETTER I.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY E—— B——.

West Ham, Nov. 14, 1805.

*My dear Lady Elizabeth,*

THE correspondence, from which I promised myself so much pleasure, has, by the occurrence of unforeseen circumstances, been interrupted; but the tender affection, which led me so willingly to embrace the proposal of entering into it, remains unimpaired. Of the nature and strength of that affection, you have had so many convincing proofs, that, young as you are, I have no apprehension of their being ever effaced from your remembrance.

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The

The full assurance I possess of having gained the love, the confidence, and esteem of the most amiable and engaging of children is, I confess, extremely gratifying to my heart; it is the more gratifying from a consciousness of never having permitted any consideration to interfere with what appeared to me the great and real interests of the precious objects of my tenderness. It is, indeed, a great consolation to reflect, that in every recollected proof of the strength of my attachment you will be able to trace the undeviating steadiness of the principles by which it was guided; nor have I any doubts concerning the nature of the impression they left upon your mind.

The hopes I formed respecting you, my beloved child, will, I trust, be amply realized: and, though the time I had the pleasure of spending with

with you was too short to admit of any thing like a regular development of the plan I had formed for your improvement, I trust the corner stone which I laid will be retained as the foundation of the future superstructure. The emotion, with which you received many of the important truths it was my delight to unfold to you, gives me reason to hope, that the foundation, thus laid, will not be easily shaken. But though many of these truths may retain a place in your memory, your recollection with regard to others may be imperfect. Even those remembered with accuracy will be recalled in a detached form, and not as parts of one great and connected whole. They will have the force of precepts, but they will not have the power of principles.

The primary object of the letters which I have it now in contemplation

to address to you is to supply this deficiency. Of the various motives which have determined me to give them in a public form, I shall only mention that which immediately concerns yourself; and which I hope will be sufficient to obviate all the objections that can be made against it.

No communication of my sentiments would, I am persuaded, have been received by you with indifference; but how could I expect that, at your tender age, letters in manuscript would be preserved with care, or, if preserved, that they would be re-perused in a regular series, so as to give them the advantage of connexion?

Nor is this all. Of written letters addressed to you, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, to you the benefit must have been exclusively confined. It is not so with my affection, which  
embraces,

embraces, with almost equal warmth, every individual of that lovely circle, on which I have never looked but with emotions of delight; on which I can never think but with the most lively, the most heart-felt interest!

Those instructions which your superior years and more ripened intellect rendered it proper, in the time we spent together, to address exclusively to you, would, had circumstances permitted me to prolong my visit, have been in substance repeated to your sisters. That they will now be repeated with the same effect as when I had it in my power to watch the favourable moment of impression, and to seize the opportunity which passing events afforded for illustrating their utility, it were vain to expect. But they will still have these advantages over the instructions to be found in other books, they will be associated



( 6 )

in the memory with the recollection of those blissful hours, when the newly awakened mind first learned to exert its powers of observation ; when the sports of infancy were found a source of delight and of instruction ; when the understanding was first taught to reason, and the heart to feel ; — above all, they will be remembered as the parting-gift of a fond, an indulgent, and ever faithful friend !

LETTER II.

---

*My dearest Lady Elizabeth,*

**Y**OU are too well acquainted with my sentiments to render it necessary to inform you that there is, in my opinion, **ONE** great object in education, to which all others should be subservient, with which no other should interfere, and in comparison with which all other objects are as dust in the balance.

To learn to make such a use of all the talents which heaven has bestowed as shall lead to the attainment of everlasting glory, is the central point to which all our views and efforts ought

to be directed: nor, unless our conceptions upon this subject are very dark and confused, shall we suffer any apprehension of being obliged to make a sacrifice of our happiness here, to the hopes of obtaining happiness hereafter. Did our happiness here consist in the unlimited gratification of every appetite and passion, this would certainly be the case; but even the experience of childhood is sufficient to prove the contrary.

Did any of my dear little girls ever feel so happy in the indulgence of a capricious humour, as they have done when, after having conquered the wayward inclination to disobedience, they have read in the eyes of their friends that approbation which their little hearts exulted in the consciousness of having merited? Through every stage of life the feelings in this respect will be the same. The conquest

quest gained over every inclination, which reason and religion teach us to subdue, will constantly be followed by a greater degree of happiness than the gratification of it could have procured.

To illustrate this truth was the chief aim of all the best philosophers of Greece and Rome. But you, my dear child, have been initiated in the doctrines of a philosophy more valuable than all they knew or taught; a philosophy, which, instead of laying down rules for the conduct in particular instances, extends its purifying influence to the inmost recesses of the heart. The delight with which you imbibed its sacred tenets, the deep impression which they made upon your mind, and the salutary influence which they evidently shed over your heart, have opened to me a source of hope with regard to you, which, I

trust in God, will never be exhausted. The morning hours we spent together will not, I flatter myself, be soon forgotten by either party; nor, while the promise you made me at parting, of pursuing the same practice, and commencing the studies of every day by reading a portion of the holy scripture, is on your part fulfilled, will the blessing, which seemed to rest upon them, be withdrawn.

In the holy scriptures you will find all that is necessary to make you "wise unto salvation." But it is not a mere speculative knowledge of all the truths which they contain, that will be thus effectual: for all that scripture teaches us is known, and acknowledged to be true, by thousands, who nevertheless continue to act just in the same manner as they would have acted, had they never heard of  
a God

a God or Saviour. Knowledge does not necessarily imply *principle*. How this happens, I shall hereafter explain.

It may, in the first place be expedient to consider what we mean by *principle*. It is a term so often made use of that it must be familiar to your ear ; but you know I am a great friend to accuracy, with regard to our notions respecting the meaning of the words we use ; nor have I often found the precaution unnecessary, especially when a term is employed in more senses than one.

When we speak of the *first principle* of any thing, we mean something that is essential to its existence, and without which it could not be. Thus, we say that to believe in God is the *first principle* of all religion, because without a belief in God there could be no religion

whatever. We say likewise that truth and justice are first principles in morals, because truth and justice are essential to our notions of morality. But when we say that such a one has good or bad principles, I am afraid we do not always so thoroughly comprehend the full force of the expression.

To have good principles is not merely to have a knowledge of our duty, but to have such a deep sense of moral obligation, as shall render that knowledge effectual, by impelling us at all times, and under every circumstance, to judge and act according to its dictates.

The difference between a good education and a bad one, in my opinion is, that in the course of the former the young mind is *assisted* in transforming the precepts of religion and virtue into those habits of thinking and acting, which are  
 termed

termed ruling principles; and that in the latter, no such assistance is afforded.

This will explain to you why I took so much pains to induce you to bring every opinion and action to a certain test — a test to which you had in all cases previously yielded a full assent. It will explain to you, why I never thought, in any thing relative to moral conduct, mere *restriction* to be sufficient, but endeavoured to prompt, even the youngest of you, to acquire a habit of *self-control* from a sense of interest and of duty.

At the distance to which I am now removed, I can no longer thus assist you: but of such assistance I trust you will never be entirely destitute. It is, however, no more than assistance that can be afforded you by the most enlightened or zealous friends



friends you can possibly be ever blessed with. They may give you precepts, but it is by your own practical exercise of the precepts taught, that they must be worked into the principles upon which your future character will depend.

I had the pleasure of witnessing in many instances, the spontaneous effects of this dawn of principle, in the children so dear to my affections : but it is by constant and habitual exercise that it can alone be confirmed ; and as this exercise depends in a great measure on the force with which the precepts of religion and virtue recur to the mind, it is necessary that these precepts should be kept in your remembrance by frequent repetition. In this view my correspondence may still be serviceable.

While it was in my power to lay  
hold

hold on the favourable moment for impressing the mind with religious or moral sentiments, I often preferred indirect methods of instruction. Leaving to the care of your zealous and indefatigable governess to instruct you in the letter of the law, I endeavoured, in the hours of play and relaxation, to impress its spirit on the heart. My instructions, as they must now necessarily assume a graver form, so must they embrace a wider field than when drawn forth by the passing occurrences of the day, and confined to topics which you were fully prepared, by previous information, to comprehend. But I promise you, they shall be enlivened as much as possible by the sort of illustration best suited to your present taste. On parts of my subject that are yet new to you I may, perhaps, at first reading appear obscure.

I hope

I hope I shall seldom be altogether unintelligible : but whenever you meet with any thing that you do not perfectly understand, I would recommend it to you to mark the passage with your pencil, and, after you have gone through the whole, to return to it and give it the advantage of reconsideration. You will, however, as I trust, have little reason to complain of obscurity, provided you read with attention ; and it is only according to the degree of attention you bestow, that I expect you to profit by the perusal.

I consider it as your peculiar happiness, my dear Lady Elizabeth, that you have never learned to connect the idea of dulness, with subjects that are in their nature serious. Were it not for my knowledge of this favourable circumstance, I should scarcely dare to hope for your attention, where  
there

there is so little prospect of amusement; but I know that it is not with you always necessary to engage the fancy, in order to interest the heart.

When united to such a flow of spirits as you naturally possess, a taste for serious reading, and a relish for serious conversation, become a blessing of the first magnitude; for there is then no reason to apprehend that the youthful mind will lose its sprightly tone, by the force of any impressions made upon it by premature reflection. You know how little friendly I am to aught that is gloomy or austere. You know happiness to be my professed object, and that all to which my arguments tend, is to persuade you never, upon any account, to sacrifice a greater portion of happiness to a lesser.

Children, and men, who are still but children past growing, are, in  
some

some respects, upon the same footing. All are alike in training for a state to which they have not yet arrived. Childhood is a state of preparation for youth; youth for maturity; and maturity for that state of existence beyond the grave, of which this very analogy might give us some notion, but of which the goodness of God has in mercy assured us, through Jesus Christ.

Upon a very little consideration you will perceive, that the well-being and happiness of each of these states of existence, depend much upon the preparation made for it in the preceding state. Children who have been very much neglected in infancy, and whose faculties have never been exercised, will find their tasks much more difficult than those who have been early taught to pay attention to objects of improvement. If, through  
the

the agency of careless or wicked persons, they have acquired bad habits, they will suffer yet more severely; and if these bad habits are not resolutely conquered, they will suffer through life; accumulating in all its stages sin, and reaping in all its stages sorrow. Nor are we authorized, either by reason or scripture, to conclude, that the consequences will with this life end: for as you see in the case I have stated, the youth suffers for what was done or neglected in childhood, and the man suffers for having neglected the opportunity of improvement in youth; it seems to be but a continuation of the same chain of consequences, that he should, in the ensuing state suffer, for what he had done or neglected in the last. But this most dreadful penalty, it was in his own power, by timely repentance to have averted. He might in youth,

youth, by application, have made up for the neglect of childhood. He might by self-restraint have controlled the passions which had been fostered by indulgence, and by storing his mind with the best motives, and acting up to the degree of knowledge he possessed, have prepared himself for entering on the future with advantage. Even after he had reached maturity, the sins of his youth might by penitence have been cancelled. But though, while life is granted, the gates of mercy stand open, those who have not in the morning of life been put upon the path that leads to them, will not be apt to explore it when the day draws near its close! To that path there is no certain and infallible guide, but fixed and steady principles.

That much may be done towards the formation of religious and moral principles,

ciples, even in the early years of life, I have always been inclined to believe, and the experience which I obtained during the last summer, has transformed belief into certainty. To make children sensible of the advantage to be derived from making slight sacrifices of the present will, in order to attain a greater degree of future happiness, seemed much more difficult in theory, than I found it to be in practice. A provision seems indeed to have been made for this necessary part of the education of the human race, through all the successive stages of life, as in none of them are we permitted the gratuitous enjoyment of what appears to our imaginations the greatest good. The unlimited indulgence of the prevailing desire, is in general recompensed by future misery ; nor is future happiness in any of the stages of life, to be purchased



chased without a certain portion of present pain. If virtue be on one side connected with felicity, it is on the other linked to self-denial: and if wisdom and honour are the companions of knowledge, knowledge is herself the offspring of diligence and application.

All the decorums of life, all the graces which constitute the charm of polished manners, are the offspring of restraint imposed on inclination; nor till they have acquired the force of habits, are they adopted by nature as her own. Before this can be accomplished, how many painful sacrifices must be paid!

When I affirm that labour and self-denial are the appointed tutors of the human race, to whom all must submit, who would attain to excellence; I do not wish to check the playful vivacity of the youthful fancy, by anticipated

anticipated views of suffering and sorrow. The doctrine which I now inculcate, is indeed of such extensive application, as to embrace every state and period of our existence : but Providence which wisely ordereth all things, while it has rendered the wholesome discipline of restraint alike necessary, in youth and in age, to future happiness and glory, has, with regard to childhood, softened the rigour of the decree, by bestowing such an elasticity of spirits, as prevents any bad effects from momentary dejection. The instant restraint is taken off, the light heart rebounds to joy. The tear of sorrow is arrested in the eye of innocence by the smile of pleasure. The sigh of disappointment is no sooner breathed than it is forgotten !

It is not the child, but the parent, or those who without a parent's name  
experience

experience the yearnings of parental tenderness, that are then the real sufferers. I know not that the virtue of fortitude can be put to a severer test, than when called on to inflict any degree of pain on the objects of affection.

To check that gaiety, which is perhaps the sole enlivener of existence ; to enforce obedience at the moment that one wishes to impart delight ; to cross inclination when the heart dissolves in tender love ; and to suffuse with tears those angel eyes, which beam their sweetness on the soul, requires no mean effort of resolution. Unless when the parent's mind is blessed with such powers of comprehension, as to see clearly what sacrifices the future good demands, and possesses sufficient firmness to make the sacrifice demanded, it is not to be expected that such efforts will be made,

made. But when they at any time are made by a fond and indulgent friend, it will be to an amiable child a source of future happiness and gratitude. May you, my amiable young friend, profit alike by the indulgence which anticipates your wishes, and by the disappointments which cross them! May the one increase benevolence, without impairing the power of self-control, and the other teach you resignation, without lessening benevolence! Adieu.

West Ham, Nov. 21st, 1805.

LETTER III.

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**H**AVING in my last letter explained to you how much our happiness, through every period of life, depends on the conduct of the preceding period, I shall now give you the best directions in my power for improving this important truth into a principle of action.

It is impossible for us, at an early period of life, or indeed at any period, to have clear views concerning the remote consequences of our actions; but if we do not live in a constant habit of self-deception, we can seldom be at a loss to know the motives

motives from which they proceed.  
To illustrate this,

Let us suppose a young lady, who, from not having been accustomed to exercise attention, finds the application necessary to the acquirement of any branch of education, to be accompanied with trouble and fatigue ; and who therefore trifles away the time which she ought to have devoted to it. She cannot see all the consequences of thus idly wasting the season of improvement : but she knows that the indulgence of indolence is the motive, and that indolence is a vice, inasmuch as it is the foe of every virtue. She therefore errs against conviction ; and, though she may not have very adequate notions of the disadvantages which will hereafter arise to her in consequence of her present neglect, she must have observed, or heard, that gross ignorance will

expose her to deserved contempt. She is conscious that she will be miserable in being despised ; but the temptation is at hand — the misery is at a distance. She therefore indulges the desire of the present moment, and drives the thoughts of the future from her mind.

Here you evidently see the difference between knowledge and principle. This young lady could discriminate between right and wrong in her motives, and could even foresee the consequences that would ensue as detrimental to her happiness, and yet her conduct was just the same as if she had neither felt the one, nor foreseen the other. But had her knowledge of what was right, habitually led to the practice of it, she would, as soon as she became conscious of what her duty was, have resolutely sacrificed the inclinations that opposed it.

Lady



Lady Fanny — had exactly the same disposition to indolence, the same aversion to study as the young lady mentioned above: but they were brought up in different notions of duty. Miss — had unfortunately learned to think, that because she was an heiress, and an only child, she was accountable to no one. Lady Fanny lived with an aunt, who called her to an exact account for every mis-spent moment. The value of time, and the important consequences of employing the hours of early youth to the best advantage, were so often presented to her mind, that whenever she found herself inclined to loiter away the morning in doing nothing, the conviction she had obtained of the impropriety of indulging in this way occurred to her recollection. She instantly shook off sloth, and applied herself with diligence to something useful.



useful. She at first indeed, and while she continued a little child, was chiefly influenced by the dread of incurring her aunt's displeasure, and the hope of obtaining her approbation, without any distinct notions concerning the moral reasons for either: but as she grew older and wiser, these appeared to her in their proper light; they accorded with the dictates of conscience, and with all those views of duty which religious instruction presented to her mind. Thus you perceive that the idea of accountableness, which in childhood extended only to the parent who instructed her, was the means of laying the foundation of those habits of mind, which led to the active discharge of every duty.

In our early years, we only consider ourselves accountable to those whom Providence has set over us. Religion extends our views. It exhibits

hibits to us the omnipotent and eternal Governor of the universe, as intimately acquainted with all our thoughts, and words, and actions. It gives us the assurance that he who is now our witness, will hereafter be our judge; and that to him we shall be obliged to render a strict account, not only of all we do, but of all we utter, and of all we think. It is in this idea of accountableness, when it becomes habitual to the mind, so as on all occasions instantaneously to present itself, and constantly to influence our practice, that we shall find the true security of virtue.

An idea of our being accountable to God, may float in the imagination, nay, it may in our serious moments become an object of our firm belief; but it is not until it dwells in our hearts, and restrains or prompts us in our actions, that it can be said to be

to us a principle. The importance of thus fixing this invaluable principle in the heart, is too obvious to require explanation. Even they who have it not; they who never act but from the impulse of the present passion, will not deny its utility with regard to others. None can wish well to any individual, and not wish that his or her general conduct may be such as will be approved of God; and as a constant sense of being accountable to God for every action is the leading security for such a line of conduct, none will speak lightly of such a principle to those in whose virtue they have any interest.

This is one of the many instances in which vice is obliged to yield to virtue. The young lady whom I introduced a few pages ago, would not have chosen, while she indulged her own indolence, to recommend the same

same sort of indulgence to those on whose active exertions she depended for any of her comforts. By this test we may often be able to discover what is really right, and to detect what is really wrong. But to return to our more immediate subject.

In order to render the belief of our being accountable to God a governing principle, it is necessary that we, in the first place, endeavour to impress it upon our minds by seriously attending to what is said of it in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament ; and in order to keep up the force of the impression, that we recal it frequently to our remembrance, particularly before and after the performance of any action that is not of a nature morally indifferent.

Now all this, you perceive, must be your own act and deed. All that any friend can do, is to stir you up to the

the necessary exertion ; but still I pray you to remember, that before it can be of any benefit to you, the principle must have been made your own. That you may meet with as little to obstruct you as possible in thus improving the idea of accountableness into an active principle, I shall now endeavour to put you on your guard against the obstacles you are most likely to meet with, so that they may either be avoided or overcome.

The first I shall mention arises from a temptation by which we are at all ages very apt to be beset, viz. measuring our attainments and deficiencies, our good and our bad qualities by a false standard ; and rejoicing in the flattering assurance we thence obtain, that we are no worse than others.

Miss Gloss affords an instance exactly in point. She lives with her  
grand-

grand-mamma, a lady of great age and experience, and of excellent good sense; and who, notwithstanding her extreme fondness for her grandchild, sees and points out her faults. She never has, however, in any instance, been able to convince Miss Gloss that she was much to blame, or to lead her to any serious purpose of amendment: for unfortunately it has happened, that of every fault which her grandmother has discovered, some one or other of Miss Gloss's companions have been still more guilty than herself. Her method of arguing is as follows: " Well, I am sure, though I won't say that it was not wrong to do so or so, it was not more wrong in me than in Lady Jane, or Lady Mary, or Miss Louisa, and yet who finds fault with them? Are not they praised and admired by every

c 6                      " one?


“ one ? Why should I pretend to be  
“ better than they are ? I wish only  
“ I were half as good ! ”

This habit of justifying herself by the faults of others, has created in Miss Gloss a propensity to seek for the faults of which she is to make this convenient use. She seeks with a wish to find ; and no sooner is this wish born than it gives birth to malignity. Never do you hear Miss Gloss speak of a generous or noble action performed by any one of her acquaintance. Never does she, of her own accord, acknowledge the superiority of one who is distinguished for talents, or admire another on account of her genius, or praise a third because of her goodness of heart ; but in none does she fail to discern the petty blemish which serves her at once as a consolation and excuse for conscious inferiority.

You

You will consider Miss Gloss as a very detestable character : but in truth, my dear, she is no worse than the generality of what is termed *the world*. Her faults are the natural result of the absence of that principle which I have been so strenuously recommending. Had Miss Gloss kept it perpetually in remembrance that she was to be accountable to God for her own actions, accountable for the talents with which she was endowed, accountable for the opportunities of improvement which she possessed, and accountable for the dispositions she cherished in her heart, she would have examined herself by a less fallacious standard than the merits or demerits of those who fell within the limited sphere of her observation.

For one who is to mix with the world in an elevated situation in society, it becomes peculiarly requisite to





to have the belief of being accountable to the supreme Lord and Governor of the universe fixed in the mind as a principle of action. Where it is not thus fixed, nor brought into constant use, the example of those high in rank, in power, or in honors, and the still more fatal example of the multitudes who offer incense to the possessors of these external advantages, will be considered as the sole criterion of right and wrong.

Those who look not beyond this world, must inevitably learn to judge of themselves as they think they are judged of by the world. They will estimate others by the same rule; and, while they see that depravity of heart, and even profligacy of manners, prevent not the world from offering adulation at the shrine of power, they will put a higher value on power than on virtue; and when they

they compare themselves with those who, notwithstanding essential blemishes, are thus courted and caressed, they will lay the comparison as an opiate to conscience.

In all situations in society, this species of self-delusion is too prevalent. All are too apt to think that there is in their particular case something that demands and obtains particular indulgence; but it is in the higher classes alone that this false sentiment has a chance of remaining uncombated; because to persons thus unfortunately situated truth does not present itself unsought for, as it frequently does in a less elevated sphere. To those who have been nurtured in false notions of their own inherent superiority, truth is, in general, but an unwelcome guest; and who, knowing it to be such, would dare to introduce it to the company of a superior?

Not



Not surely those who, from motives of vanity or self-interest, solicit that superior's favour !

Even those established laws of politeness which give to polished society its most fascinating charms, are, in this view unfriendly to virtue. They teach friends to flatter ; and, by making it a principle never to speak any thing that is not agreeable, they prevent sincerity itself from speaking what is true.

You will from this observe, that when erroneous opinions have been formed by persons in the situations to which I allude, they have not the same chance of detecting their own errors, as persons whose observations on human character are exercised in a wider field. The very highest, are, in this respect, little less disadvantageously situated than the very lowest classes of society. The individuals

dividuals of each are confined to a narrow circle; but those who move in the higher have a peculiar disadvantage arising from this circumstance, viz. that narrow as their circle is, they cannot fail to observe how much it gives the tone to all that approach it. With such temptations from without and from within, what is there to preserve the pure integrity of virtue, but the perpetual consciousness of acting in the presence of "Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" Of him, before whom all distinctions are annihilated, but those which shall endure for ever! Who has ordained to each state its peculiar advantages, its peculiar difficulties, and its peculiar dangers: and who from each individual will require a strict account of the talents with which he has been especially entrusted.

You,



You, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, you who never turned a reluctant ear to the instructions of your friend, you who never bent an unwilling eye on the path of duty, will still, with the same endearing docility, enter into the spirit of the important doctrine now recommended to your attention. So when the Judge of all shall appear on the throne of his glory, ye likewise shall appear with joy; having, like the wise virgins in the parable, "kept your lamp trimmed, and your light burning," ever ready to attend the call of your Lord. Farewell.

Nov. 25, 1806.

LETTER IV.

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**T**HE belief of our being accountable to God for all our thoughts, words, and actions, naturally leads us to the consideration of the perpetual presence of the Deity; a truth so inseparably connected with the former, that we cannot separate them even in idea.

“ From the things that are made it evidently appears there is a God.” A truth so obvious, that we are apt to think it could not fail to be discovered by reason; and that by reason the discovery was no sooner made than  
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than it began to connect with it the idea of retribution. Dark indeed, and very confused, were the notions which unassisted reason struck out upon both subjects; but to us, light from on high has sprung. Let us hail its radiant beams; and pursue with gladness of heart the path which our God has in mercy vouchsafed to illuminate. \*

A stedfast faith in the omniscience

\* This is by no means asserted from a belief that the human race was ever destitute of all light upon this subject from the source of revelation. It, on the contrary, appears extremely doubtful whether any of the truths of what is commonly termed natural religion would have ever been discovered by the human understanding without such assistance. The existence of a supreme First Cause, essentially wise and good, may therefore, with more propriety, be said to have been ascertained than discovered by human reason.

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and omnipresence of the Deity, is the foundation of all religious worship : a truth to which all ages and all nations bear testimony. The belief of it is not confined to those only to whom the knowledge of salvation by our Saviour Jesus Christ has been granted ; but, however disfigured by superstition, or obscured by ignorance, it pervades the human race.

You, indeed, perhaps have heard, or may hereafter chance to hear, of Atheists — men who pretend not to believe in the being or attributes of God : but, as I have no faculties to comprehend how any creature, endowed with reason, can doubt the evidence of all its faculties, I confess I have always remained doubtful with regard to the existence of such a species of non-belief. I wish it were no less difficult to understand why a firm belief in the being and attributes



“ attain unto it. Whither shall I go  
“ from thy spirit? or whither shall I  
“ flee from thy presence? If I as-  
“ cend up into heaven, thou art  
“ there: if I make my bed in hell,  
“ thou art there. If I take the wings  
“ of the morning, and dwell in the  
“ uttermost parts of the sea, even  
“ there shall thy hand lead me, and  
“ thy right hand shall hold me.”

Delightful is the consciousness of being thus upheld by almighty power, and wrapt as it were in the arms of Omnipotence! When we cast our eyes upon the wonders of creation, and behold in the heavens, which are the work of his hands, the innumerable worlds which are placed near enough to be seen, and yet at such immense distance as to be but barely seen; when we learn the real magnitude of any one of these stupendous orbs, and compare it with  
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the seeming size, and reflect what an effort of human intellect it required to gain some feeble glimmerings of knowledge concerning the laws which guide it in its course, into what insignificance do we sink ! And yet, my beloved child, we are assured by Him, by whom all these worlds were called into existence, that our souls are precious in his sight ; and that though these worlds shall perish, our souls shall never perish, but that they shall be happy or miserable through all the ages of eternity.

God has not left it in our power to choose whether we shall exist or not. We may, by self-murder, change the state of our existence, and cut ourselves off from that chance of happiness, which, while there is opportunity of repentance, is allowed to even the worst of sinners ; but though we may destroy the body, we

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cannot

cannot shorten the duration of the soul.

We can no more alter any of the laws which God has established for the government of the moral and intellectual world, by any imagination we may entertain concerning them, than we can alter the laws of the material world by our foolish fancies. Suppose a person, who likes to lie in bed all day, and takes special care to have all his windows well secured from the intrusion of any ray of light, should, while he rejoices in darkness, take it into his head to imagine that the sun had forgotten to rise, and was never again to shine upon the world, should we not think him very absurd? How much more so should we consider him if he proceeded to act upon this foolish supposition, and to order all his affairs as if the world was thenceforth to be involved in perpetual

petual night; and this on no better grounds than because he could not through his massy shutters see the sun!

And yet on no better foundation than this do thousands, and tens of thousands, order the affairs that are of the last importance to their eternal happiness. Loving to live in mental darkness, they foolishly encourage themselves in cherishing a belief that there is no light, and continue to persuade themselves, that since they think so, it must be so, till that awful period arrives, when the fabric of their dwelling is dissolved, and the unwelcome sun of truth bursts on their astonished souls!

Never, oh! never may any of the children so dear to my affections be in the number of this self-deluded multitude! May they never forget that God has endowed them with rea-

sonable souls, and made them accountable for the use they make of the faculties he has bestowed ; that he has made them capable of eternal happiness, and liable to incur the penalty of eternal pain. That he has placed this happiness and misery in their own immediate reach ; but that while he has guarded them from the latter by the monitions of reason, the remonstrances of conscience, and the light of revelation, he has called them to the former by the most powerful impulses of nature ; has made heaven and earth, all the works of creation and providence, instrumental to their instruction, and that he has promised the aids of divine grace to lead them to everlasting glory.

If the God who is ever present with us, not only wills our happiness, but (to use the language suited to our present weakness) has taken in-

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finite pains to secure it to us, does it not follow, that we are bound on our part to pursue that path towards it which he has pointed out? Now this path, though it is acknowledged to be narrow, is neither thorny nor intricate.

We must, if we desire to keep upon it, be vigilant. We must endeavour to attain a complete control over every passion which would lead us to transgress its bounds. We must teach self-will to relinquish its impetuosity, and self-love to unite itself in firm alliance with charity and benevolence. We may lay our accounts with having much to resist, and something to suffer: and we can neither suffer nor resist without the exertion of activity and fortitude. Activity and fortitude are therefore most necessary to our success: let us but exert

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them as we ought, and the obstacles which at first view appeared most formidable, will vanish and be forgotten !

Adieu.

Nov. 29, 1805.

## LETTER V.

I TRUST, my dearest Lady Elizabeth is not yet so tired of the subject on which I entered in my last letter, as to be averse from renewing it. Did our living in the presence of God depend upon our own choice, and was the all-seeing eye of Deity to be withdrawn whenever we please to exclude it from our thoughts, then indeed the friend might be deemed impertinent, who endeavoured to recall the unbidden guest. But as there cannot be a moment throughout the whole period of our existence, in which we can act unwitnessed by



our Creator and our Judge, and as we are by him expressly told that “ he “ that seeth in secret shall reward us “ openly,” no means ought to be neglected or despised which can afford us any assistance towards establishing this important truth as a principle in our minds.

It is in the season of youth, while the heart is most alive to every generous impulse ; and when nature, sensible of its weakness, teaches it to glow with gratitude for the protection of which it stands so much in need ; that a habit of living in the presence of God can be most effectually established.

Very happy I am in the idea of having in some degree contributed towards laying a foundation for the establishment of this habitual consideration of the most important of truths in the minds of my young friends :

friends : nor, while I can thus flatter myself, shall I ever look back but with pleasure and satisfaction, to the hours we spent together in that retirement, which I purposely preferred to gayer scenes, in order to have it in my power to bestow on you an undivided attention.

It was there you first learned " to look through nature up to nature's God ;" it was there you first began to read, in the wondrous fabric of the universe, the wisdom and the power of the great Creator : and, when you became sensible of the manifestations of his goodness, how did you rejoice in the consciousness that this great Creator, so full of wisdom and benevolence, is " the God in whom we live and move and have our being !" May this reflection be ever, as it then was, a subject of delight and gladness to your heart !

and such you may be assured it ever will be, while you persevere in cultivating in yourself a disposition to keep it perpetually in remembrance.

Gratitude is one of the most delightful emotions of which we are susceptible. Not even a *conviction* of unworthiness in the person to whom we have in any instance been indebted for an act of kindness, can stifle the pleasure which accompanies every recollection of such circumstance in a truly generous mind. But when our gratitude ascends towards an object whom we perfectly love and cordially esteem, it is then a feeling of pure and unmixed delight; a feeling which elevates and harmonizes the soul, and inclines us to impart to others a share of the felicity which glows within our own bosoms.

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These are the joys which religion bestows on her sincere votaries.

But then — the religion of which I speak, is not a thing made up of shreds and patches. It is not a thing to be resumed at intervals, and to which you are only to devote the fag ends of your time. It is not to be considered as a science, in its nature separate and distinct from the conduct and concerns of life ; but as the life of every duty, the animating principle of every action ; it must dwell, not upon your lips, but *in your heart.*

I am aware that it is not thus that you will at all times hear it represented. People who are destitute either of capacity or inclination for examining the nature of that gracious covenant, which God of his infinite mercy has promulged, when they recommend religion to you, will

speak of it as a matter of mere propriety and decorum, an accomplishment becoming your sex and age; while by others, still more foolish or more ignorant, an observation of its ceremonies may be enforced, from a belief that they will operate *as a charm* in keeping you from evil.

Into this sort of superstition I am persuaded you have too much good sense to be apt to fall. Never, indeed, can you fall into it, while you make a practice of reading the word of God with attention, and with a view to imbibe the spirit of the precepts it enforces and the doctrines which it unfolds. But though you may thus be preserved from erroneous notions concerning what religion is, and what it requires of you to be, still, I must repeat it, the most just opinions you can form will be of no further use than

than as they come to be habitually present to your mind.

Of all the doctrines of our holy faith, there is none more simple, more easy to be understood, or which presents itself to us in a manner so irresistible, as that of the presence of God; and yet, where it has not been early impressed as a practical doctrine, how feeble is its influence in preserving us from the commission of sins!

In every prayer we offer up to the Almighty, we solemnly recognize the awful truth; for, without a firm belief in the immediate presence of the Being to whom our prayers are addressed, we are guilty of profaneness in repeating them, inasmuch as in doing so we “take the name of the Lord our God in vain.” Thus devotion, which should be found the most effectual means of improving our faith in the everlasting

everlasting presence of God, into an active and abiding principle, is converted into an engine of superstition. It not only ceases to be of any use, but, by creating a habit of self-delusion and of dissimulation, is positively injurious.

A subject which involves in it consequences of so very serious a nature, demands a little further attention, Let us then endeavour to find out the cause why people, sometimes even through life, go on repeating their prayers in this careless and reprehensible manner ; and then inquire how the fatal error may most effectually be avoided.

That children should, even from early infancy, be accustomed to begin and end the day with prayer, will not be disputed by any one who considers the force of habit, and observes how the return of any stated period serves  
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to recall the same trains of thought to which we have for any length of time been used regularly to devote it. On this account it becomes proper, even before children can form any adequate idea of the duty of prayer, to enforce its performance, and to teach them the *form* before they can acquire the *spirit* of devotion.

It however too often happens, that the habit, thus acquired, of repeating a certain set of words mechanically, at certain hours, is all that it is thought necessary to teach. The habit remains, perhaps, through life ; but it remains as it was at first — mechanical. It produces no impression of the presence of God upon the mind : it excites no emotion of love, or of gratitude, or of veneration, in the heart, and consequently has no influence upon the conduct.

When people have been long accustomed



customed to slur over their devotions in this careless manner, and to cheat themselves into a belief, that by repeating a form of words they do all that is required in the performance of this momentous duty, the consequences which I have pointed out must inevitably follow; for it must be very evident to your understanding, that if even at the moment when we solemnly invoke the Most High with our lips, no serious consideration of his immediate presence comes into our minds, there is little chance that amid the business or pleasures of life it will intrude upon our thoughts. "The fool says in his heart, there is no God;" but to say that there is a God, and yet to live as if there were none; to address him with the lips as if he were present, and yet never seriously to reflect whether he be really so, is folly, of a nature still

still more strange and unaccountable.

A poet, with whose writings you will, I hope, be one day acquainted, in speaking on this subject, justly observes, that

“ Men may live fools, but fools they cannot  
“ die.”\*

True as this certainly is, it is no less true, that the wisdom which does not arrive till death begins to open the gates of eternity, arrives too late to be of use. To you, my dear child, may it come on the wings of life's early morn, and accompany you to its closing day; and may you never forget, that if in the fear of God wisdom has its beginning, it is in a continual sense of his presence that it has its best support.

\* Young.

By

By what I have said, you will observe the fatal consequences of trusting in the efficacy of any mere outward forms of devotion, and be sensible of the disadvantage under which those must labour, who have never been led beyond the first mechanical rules, which are in fact of no other use than as a preliminary towards the formation of devotional habits.

By those who have never learned to lift their hearts to God, he may be addressed with punctual regularity through every stage of life, without producing any sense of his immediate presence on the mind. But never can it be thus with any of the beloved children to whom I now address myself. So easily were they impressed with love, and reverence, and gratitude, towards their great Creator, that piety seemed in them the spontaneous offspring of feeling.

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The habit of looking up to God through all his works, and of considering him as the author and giver of every good, as it seemed of all other habits that which was with least difficulty acquired, so I trust it will of all others be found to have taken the deepest root. But, though planted in a congenial soil, it will not spring unless care be taken to cherish and improve it. That care, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, must now be yours. In aid of it, take all I now can offer — a few affectionate instructions.

In order to render prayer an effectual mean of establishing an abiding sense of the presence of Deity in your heart, I should earnestly recommend it to you, before you bow the knee to God, to ask yourself the following questions: “ To whom am  
“ I going to address myself? Am

“ I about

“ I about to speak to the great  
“ Creator of the universe! To Him  
“ whom angels and arch-angels wor-  
“ ship; who is from eternity to eter-  
“ nity unchangeably the same! To  
“ Him who knows every thought  
“ that passes through my heart, and  
“ has been the witness of all my  
“ actions! And how can I, weak,  
“ and ignorant, and sinful, as I am,  
“ hope to have my prayers accepted?  
“ I hope to have them accepted  
“ through the Lord Jesus Christ, my  
“ redeemer and mediator. He has  
“ commanded, he has taught me to  
“ pray; and through his merits and  
“ intercessions, will make my prayers  
“ acceptable at the throne of grace.”

Some such reflections as these, seriously made before you enter upon the duty of prayer, will make the regular performance of it the certain means of keeping alive a sense of the  
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the Divine Presence in your heart. Of other benefits to be derived from prayer, I shall have occasion to speak more fully hereafter : I now confine myself solely to the consideration of its use as tending to impress our minds with such a conviction of the presence of God as cannot fail to influence our conduct. But this conviction must not only be sincere ; it must be constant. Though it returns with the morning dew, it must not like the morning dew evaporate with the heat of the mid-day sun.

In order to prevent this, a habit of looking up to God, as the disposer of every event in life, as the dispenser of every blessing, and as the immediate giver of every good, must be acquired and cherished. This is, in my opinion, the grand arcana of happiness. It enhances the value of every

every blessing, and alleviates the pain of every sorrow.

The truth of this may at present be best illustrated to you by a familiar example. When you are gratified by the possession of any object upon which you have set your heart, does not the idea of its having been bestowed as a mark of affection by a fond and indulgent parent, add to your gratification? Or, when you are disappointed in your wishes, but are at the same time convinced that the object was withheld from motives of affection, and with a view to procure for you a greater good than the accomplishment of your wishes could have bestowed, does not the conviction instantly disarm disappointment of its sting? If our confidence in the wisdom, love, and affection of a being subject to error can

can thus operate, how much more effectually must our confidence in the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father tend to rejoice or tranquillize our hearts! One thing more I shall only mention.

As the works of nature tend much more than the works of art to raise our thoughts to heaven, I would earnestly recommend it to you to pursue the study, for which you appeared to have such a decided taste. Natural history, in all its branches, leads the mind to a perpetual admiration of the wisdom and power of the Supreme Being. Of its efficacy in producing habits of attention, I had many convincing proofs; but had it answered no other purpose than to cherish in your mind those feelings that arise from contemplating the wisdom of God in his works, the time bestowed on it would not have been spent in vain.



vain. Happily, the hours thus devoted passed pleasantly as well as profitably ; nor did I ever observe that the glow of animation, which naturally arises from pursuing what is agreeable to the fancy, received the slightest check from connecting that pursuit with sentiments allied to the spirit of devotion.

May the search after truth, in all its forms, be ever attended with similar satisfaction ! May every pursuit into which you enter with avidity be not only innocent in its nature, but in some degree calculated to strengthen your faith, to invigorate your hope, and to keep you unspotted from the world !

Adieu.

Dec. 3, 1805.

LETTER VI.

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**L**ET us, my dear young friend, before we proceed any farther in the examination of those principles on which we build our hopes of present peace and future happiness, cast a retrospective glance at the ground we have already passed.

A belief in the existence of the Supreme Being, I have considered as the first principle of all religion: truth and justice as the first principles of moral rectitude. I have endeavoured to impress upon your mind a distinct notion of the difference between

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knowledge

knowledge and principle, and shewn you, that our belief in God, as our present witness and our future judge, must be grafted in our hearts, so as to recur and operate with constant unremitting force, before it is to us as a principle.

With regard to our ideas of truth and justice, the case is exactly similar. We may entertain very just notions respecting both, and be perfectly well instructed concerning the obligations we are under to the practice of virtues which are so essential to the happiness of society, and, notwithstanding all this instruction, be in our dealings neither *just* nor *true*. Depend upon it we shall be neither one nor other until truth and justice become habits of our minds, and by becoming such, are converted into active principles.

It would be absurd to perplex you  
with

with abstract definitions concerning the nature of these important principles; and to speak of their utility must be superfluous: but, supposing you perfectly well informed in regard to every thing that can be urged in favour of justice and of truth, I shall confine myself to such points as may most effectually tend to establish you in their practice.

To speak the truth at all times from the heart, appears at first view to be so easy and so natural, that we are inclined to wonder why it should not be always thus spoken. And so it would be spoken, were it not for the passions by which we are too often influenced.

There is not a passion in the human heart that does not in some degree tend to lead us astray from the simplicity of truth. Love blinds us to the faults and imperfections of its object,

and so prevents us from seeing truth. Fear deters us from acknowledging it, and makes us even go over to the other side and take the part of falsehood. Hatred puts a thicker bandage on our eyes than love; and spite, and envy, and malice, are all sworn foes of truth and justice. Pride, by enhancing our own merits, and exciting exaggerated notions of our own importance, leads us far astray from truth; and self-love gives it such an artful colouring, that it is scarcely to be detected through the deep disguise.

Exposed as we are to the perpetual recurrence of some or other of these passions, how are we to preserve ourselves in a steady adherence to truth, so as never to depart from it, even when assailed by the strongest temptation? I confess I know of no way which is to a certainty effectual, but  
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that of living in a constant and unremitting consciousness of the presence of God. The desire of pleasing him will then be the predominant desire of our hearts; and this desire, when it becomes habitual, will, by destroying the power of the malignant passions, cut off the most formidable enemies which truth has to encounter. It will then be our first wish, with regard to those we love, that they should be beloved by God; and therefore, instead of dissembling their faults, we shall endeavour to amend them. Fear will then inlist on the side of truth; for how should we fear "those who can only kill the body," when impressed with an awful consciousness of standing in the presence of Him, "who can cast soul and body into fire everlasting."

Were our faith in the existence

and presence of the Deity sufficiently strong, and our belief in a state of future retribution sufficiently accurate, it would be almost impossible for us in any instance to make a willing departure from truth. All the little arts of palliation and equivocation would then be held in deserved abhorrence. We should, in all we say, speak as those who "speak not unto men, but unto God;" who know that as he now sees us, we shall hereafter be seen by all.

A child who had been induced to tell lies through fear of punishment, would not (unless the habit were very inveterate indeed) tell a falsehood in which he was certain of being immediately detected. And what is the span of life! how short! how uncertain! How little is it worth our pains, for any paltry consideration, to dissemble what in a little—a *very little* while,

while, will stand revealed to men and angels!

The farther my acquaintance with the world extends, the more deeply am I confirmed in the opinion, that the principles of truth have no other solid basis than the fear of God. If I have ever been led to imagine that notions of honour and of self-respect would insure a strict adherence to truth and justice, I have been amply convinced of my error!

Honour, true and genuine honour, has indeed the spirit of truth and justice for its very essence. It is, when thus connected, immutable and inflexible in its decrees, obliging people to act in the privacy of retirement as they would act on the crowded theatre of public life; giving to promises the force of law, and to confidence received, the bond of security. And do not the principles



of religion do all this? Religion is therefore the basis of honour. Seriously, and from conviction, I can assure you, that the sense of honour, which has no other foundation than the opinion of the world, has neither strength nor substance. Before the impetuosity of the passions it melts like the snow-flake, which is now driven against my window by the southern wind!

Nor is an habitual sense of the presence of God less essential to the practice of justice, than I have shewn it to be essential to the practice of truth. Truth and justice are inseparably connected. They who love the one must cherish the other. They who despise the one must forsake the other also. The same passions which lead to a transgression of the one will lead to a transgression of the other; and the same principles

ples which preserve the integrity of the one, will fix a regard to the other in our hearts. So long as we permit pride, or self-love, or interest, or fear, or any other passion, to induce us to make exceptions with regard to the strict practice of either truth or justice, we deceive ourselves if we imagine that truth and justice are to us as principles. We, in that case, have in fact *no* principles. We are the mere slaves of present impulse, and live as the brutes which perish.

Justice, in its strictest sense, includes the strict performance of all the duties we owe to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves. If justice be in our hearts a principle of action, we shall carefully inform ourselves of the nature and extent of these several duties, so that we may be found deficient in none: giving unto Cæsar

what is Cæsar's, and rendering unto God what is God's.

If God be indeed our creator, preserver, and bountiful benefactor, we owe him a debt of love, reverence, and gratitude, which it would be the highest injustice to withhold.

If we have been by any means informed that God has made to mankind any revelation concerning the divine nature and the divine will, and held forth in that revelation promises of eternal happiness upon certain conditions, we cannot refrain from diligent inquiry concerning the nature of these conditions, without being guilty of injustice to our own souls. Thus to inquire is therefore a duty which we owe jointly to God and to ourselves.

My expectations concerning you, my beloved child, lead me to hope that  
you



you will enter into this inquiry with eagerness : and to give you all the aid in my power, is the object to which the second part of this series of letters shall be devoted. In the mean time, let us observe how the first principles of religion, and the first principles of morality, aid and support each other, even in their simplest forms.

Justice demands of us, that we should do to others as we would be done by in the like case : that is to say, as we could not but acknowledge to be just, if done to ourselves. If justice be fixed as a principle in our hearts, we will not permit pride to whisper any exceptions against this universal rule. We shall no more dare to deceive, or to injure, or to insult a person who is in rank or fortune our inferior, than we should dare to ensnare, deceive, injure, or

insult one whom fortune has placed upon her highest pinnacle, and armed with power to crush and to destroy us.

If the spirit of justice be in us, we shall ever be ready to support the cause of truth. I recommend this to your particular attention, because I have too much reason to believe, that it is a maxim which does not, in general, meet with the attention it deserves. Attachment to the party we espouse, or to the friends we love, or to the relations in whom we are (on any account) interested, seem, in some instances, to be deemed apology sufficient for departing from truth and perverting justice. Under this impression, people without scruple pronounce upon the cause which they know not. They without examining determine: they without hearing condemn.

demn. The reputation which towers too high for them to destroy, they endeavour to undermine; and by hints, and shrugs, and whispers, insinuate the falsehoods, which, if openly brought forward, would be repelled with all the force of truth! People may, and I fear often really do flatter themselves that in acting thus, they act wisely; nay, if to screen a friend, or to support a party be the object they have in view, that they act virtuously! Such are the fatal delusions to which a deficiency of moral and religious principle, exposes the human mind!

I would not judge severely of any one. I would make every allowance for the exaggerations of partiality, and am willing to admit that it is extremely difficult to keep the judgment unbiassed by the prejudices of affection. But no fondness of affection,

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no tenderness of friendship, can be admitted as a plea for violating the laws of charity, and outraging the principles of justice. Political expediency may, indeed, appear a sufficient apology in the eyes of the world, but we have no reason to believe that when we appear before the throne of God, it will then be accepted as an excuse for the breach of any positive commandment. "Whosoever loveth father or mother, or sister or brother, more than me," saith our Saviour, "is not worthy of me."

To preserve us from incurring the guilt of rash and erroneous judgment we have been expressly told, that "with what judgment we judge, we shall be judged; and that with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." Nor are the consequences of having been judged

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the force of prejudice betrayed into injustice, unfelt even in the present state.

The mind must be very callous indeed that is not wounded by the consciousness of having injured an innocent person by misrepresentations, even where no malice was intended. How much more so when conscious of having yielded to the impulse of groundless resentment, and of having been a prey to the rashness of credulity! —

You will find this beautifully illustrated in one of the eastern fables, where a man is represented as having left his sleeping child to the care of his faithful dog. On returning home he finds the cradle overturned, and the floor besmeared with blood, and, without waiting to examine, instantly kills the dog as the supposed murderer of his child. No sooner was the rash



act committed, than lifting the cradle, he finds his child safe and well, and observes at the same time the mangled carcass of a serpent, which had been destroyed by the faithful animal, whose services he had, in the rashness of fury, requited with such deep ingratitude.

I could give you many instances of real and irremediable evils produced by acts of rash injustice. But even where the evils produced are of a less serious nature, they may deeply affect the happiness of our fellow creatures. It is therefore of infinite moment to acquire, in early life, such habits of justice and of truth, as may serve as a perpetual guard, not only against the more heinous breaches of their laws, but against those petty transgressions of them, which, though they do not alarm the conscience,  
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are extremely injurious to the integrity of the moral character.

In order to this, you must accustom yourself to speak of the absent as if they were invisibly present; and to those who are present, to speak in no other way than you are conscious you will speak of them in absence. Thus shall truth and justice become habits of your mind, so fixed and settled there in the precious interval that is yet between you and the world, that when you launch upon its dangerous sea, you may not make shipwreck of your conscience.

At present you are happily exempt from many of the temptations to dissimulation and injustice by which you will hereafter be assailed; but if the principles by which these temptations are to be resisted, are not now formed, what is to save you

you from becoming their prey? Instead then of thinking how you will act in future untried scenes, be careful to regulate your conduct in the present; and instead of thinking yourself virtuous, because you have not been guilty of actions to which you had no temptation, make frequent and anxious inquiry of your own heart, how far you have, in thought, or word, or deed, offended against those principles of justice and integrity in which you have been amply instructed.

That the blessing of Him who is the God of truth may rest upon you, is the earnest prayer of your truly affectionate friend.

LETTER VII.

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ON casting my eye over my last letter, I am a little apprehensive that my dearest Lady Elizabeth may consider the principles it inculcates as somewhat too rigidly austere. “ It is impossible,” you will say, “ to pay that strict regard to truth which I have enforced, without offending against politeness. We cannot shock people who are disagreeable “ to

“ to us, by telling them that they  
“ are so ; nor can we tell people when  
“ they interrupt us by an unseason-  
“ able visit, that we wish they had  
“ staid at home.”

No, my dear, we cannot *in justice* do either ; for we have no right to shock or to offend those who have given us no moral cause of offence. Nor do we sin against truth by refraining, on such occasions, to express our feelings. But if we *pretend* to regard those for whom we have no regard, to respect those for whom we have no respect, and *gladly* to receive those whom we in reality are vexed to see, we then sin against truth and against our own souls. Nor is this sort of simulation so necessary to those who live in the world as it is generally supposed to be. I could, even in your own family, point out to you an honourable proof that  
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it is not: and that even in the common intercourse of society, sincerity need not be sacrificed in order to conciliate esteem. I could, on the contrary, produce the most satisfactory evidence to prove, that the simulation practised by vanity and selfishness, in order to deceive others into a belief that they are admired, or beloved, or esteemed, beyond what they really are, is the cause, not only of deeper, but of more frequent offence, than was ever given by an adherence to sincerity. The varnish of dissimulation, however artfully put on, cannot be always on; and when but for a moment laid aside, the features which it concealed are seen in even more than native deformity.

Let it then never for a moment be forgotten, that when you make professions of regard which you do not feel,

feel, you sin against God, against your neighbour, and against yourself. You sin against God, who is the witness of your dissimulation; against your neighbour, who is the victim of it; and against yourself, because, that by exciting hopes which you never meant to fulfil, you incur a debt which you cannot discharge without loss, or cancel without dishonour.

To cheat people of their gratitude and good will, is no less inconsistent with the principles of integrity, than to cheat them of their money: nay, it is in some respects worse, because it is a species of dishonesty which can only be practised with success on the unsuspicious and the upright.

It is no less foreign to the pure spirit of rectitude, to compliment those with whom we converse by an  
 apparent

apparent adoption of their prejudices. It may not be becoming or proper zealously to oppose them, but we may, without impropriety, be silent. Never, therefore, I beseech you, say what you think will be pleasing, in opposition to what you know to be true.

When you are called upon to speak on any past transaction, speak the truth openly, and candidly, and without reserve. Let neither fear, nor love, nor any other passion or affection of your heart, prevent you from doing justice, by inducing you to give any turn or colouring to suit the purpose of the present moment. Whenever the moral character of any human being is concerned, the principles of justice will teach us to speak in the same manner in which we should have spoken, if the recording angel stood visibly before us, transcribing



scribing every word we utter into the register of heaven.

Justice obliges us to be very careful of even remotely injuring others; and still more strictly does it bind us never by fraud or malice to deprive them of their possessions. Now, though there is no possession so precious, there is none held upon so delicate a tenure, as character. I do not speak of character only with regard to what are deemed essentials in the reputation of either man or woman; but I speak of character as made up of separate qualities, which, taken in the aggregate, convey a general idea, which is either favourable or unfavourable according to the nature of the qualities supposed to preponderate. It is upon this impression of their general character that the influence of every human being chiefly, nay, almost entirely, depends

depends. To endeavour to lessen and degrade any person, upon the grounds of an unjust and ill-founded prejudice, is therefore to deprive them of a portion of their just influence; and if we are conscious that that influence would be virtuously exerted, we become answerable to God for the consequences.

Hence arises the more than impropriety of making such reports of insulated facts, or of expressions casually dropped in the unsuspecting carelessness of confidential intercourse, as may make an impression injurious to the character. Hence, too, arises the gross injustice of reporting an expression drawn forth in the heat of argument; or a sentiment sported in jest, as if they were serious and decisive indications of the dispositions, and opinions, and principles,

ciples, of the person who uttered them.

To explain how unjust this would be, take the following instance. Suppose that in the midst of one of your sportive sallies, your papa had turned to me, with a smile, and said, "what a little fool this is!" and that I, treasuring up the expression, should now go about gravely and tell my friends, "that Lord —— thought his daughter "a fool, and that he had told me so;" in what light would you consider my conduct? And yet it is thus, in a thousand instances, that words are, in reporting them, so far perverted from their real meaning, as to serve the purposes of falsehood. Let it, then, through the whole course of your life, be a rule to you, to be no less careful of giving a false impression, than of uttering direct and notorious untruths.

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Those who speak without reflection, and who are incapable of generalising their ideas, or of taking in the whole of any subject, if they have not had their minds deeply imbued with a sense of justice, may be said to do nothing else than tell lies through life. And since there are too many who thus lightly speak, it becomes due to justice, not only to be careful of what impressions we give, but to be careful of what impressions we receive.

A pure and candid mind will always be more ready to believe, and more pleased to report, good than evil. But there is a spurious candour which annihilates all moral distinctions between good and evil, and against this I would zealously warn you. A bad and a vicious action, is a bad and vicious action,

let the person who performed it be what and who they will. No eminence of station, no charm of manners, no personal graces, no engaging qualities, can make that right which is in its nature essentially wrong. If the friend whom we most dearly love, sins against the laws of God and man, we must, in our hearts, pronounce the action sinful. But if we judge our own hearts, and have a proper sense of our own weakness, grief, untinctured by the arrogance of pride or the malignity of contempt, will accompany the sentence. We can have no pleasure in dwelling upon the faults of the most faulty ; but we must not pronounce the faulty faultless.

Occasions may, in the course of life occur, when, in justice to the innocent, and in order to protect them,

them, we may find ourselves obliged to expose the guilty. But happily such occasions do not often occur; and though, when they do, it becomes our duty, even at the risk of every personal evil, to act according to the dictates of conscience, we ought, even in such instances, to go *not one single step beyond what is absolutely necessary*. The evil which we can do no good by revealing, we are not called upon to reveal. We must not, indeed, pretend to approve where we disapprove, especially where we *highly* and *seriously* disapprove; but, unless where a higher duty interposes, we may and ought (except to the parties concerned) to be silent. Nor if we be once determined what line of conduct we ought to pursue, should we suffer ourselves to be diverted from that line of conduct by any offence committed directly

against ourselves. This would be to act from the dictates of resentment, not from the principles of justice.

It may appear to require no small degree of magnanimity and forbearance to act as I have advised ; but it in reality requires nothing more than a firm, a settled, and an ever-active belief in the presence and providence of God, and a future judgment. With this conviction upon our minds, we shall be more anxious to approve ourselves to God, than to be approved of man ; and consequently be more solicitous concerning the motives than concerning the consequences of our conduct.

The strongest symptom of innate depravity which I have ever been able to detect in the human mind, is found in the so general propensity to believe ill, upon slight grounds,  
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of those with whom we are only slightly, or perhaps not at all acquainted. You know with what earnestness I have always endeavoured to combat this propensity, wherever we have observed it. It will always be found strongest in the worst furnished minds. The consciousness of worthlessness which haunts the idle and the ignorant, is a sensation of so unpleasant a nature, that one cannot wonder they should eagerly seek to get rid of it, by turning their minds to the faults of others. But why should people, who have in them the consciousness of any worth, be so apt to believe that others are less worthy than themselves? I must, I am afraid, confess, that it can, in some instances, be no otherwise accounted for, than from a supposition of latent pride, envy, or malevolence. Sometimes, however, I have traced this



this propensity to a source different from either of these, and seen it evidently the effect of habit ; habit contracted even in the simplicity of childhood, from those with whom the first years of life were spent.

From whatever source it proceeds, a propensity to think ill of others must present a formidable obstacle to the cultivation of the principles of justice. Guard therefore, my love, I beseech you, guard against the admission of this propensity, as you value the peace and purity of your own bosom. By contemplating what is noble, and generous, and good, in human character, you will acquire a taste and an esteem for virtue. By the practice of virtue, your esteem of it will be confirmed ; the principles of justice will extend this esteem to all who, in the general tenor of their lives, have shewn themselves  
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the friends of virtue. Against such you will not be apt hastily to imbibe prejudice from the passing current of idle rumour, or the whispered misrepresentations of wilful malice. You will here, as on every other occasion, be careful to do as you would be done by.

I am aware that it will by many persons be expected that I should take some pains to warn you against the hasty reception of a too favourable impression of the hearts and dispositions of those with whom you have not had a long and intimate acquaintance. But though I cannot deny that a tendency to view human nature on its brightest side, may occasionally be productive of no small degree of mortification and disappointment; I believe that, upon the whole, it produces, to every individual

dual who cherishes it, a much greater portion of pleasure than of pain. It certainly produces a much greater portion of benevolence ; and all the beneyolent sensations are attended with pleasure ; all the malevolent with pain. Taking in, therefore, the whole of life, it is much better to be exposed to the pain of occasional disappointments, than to the pain of everlasting suspicion. And when, after such disappointments, we can retire into our own hearts, and read there an apology for our credulity, we may be wiser, but shall not be much the worse, for all that it has made us suffer.

I shall now only mention one other advantage to be derived from cultivating the principles of justice, in connection with the principles of religion, viz. that it obliges us to make  
a proper

a proper and conscientious use of the influence we possess, from whatever source it may arise.

Influence is of various kinds. There is scarcely a human being so low, so destitute, as not to possess influence of some species, or in some degree.

Children soon learn to know and to appreciate their influence. The darling boy who obtained such a share of my affections was perfectly conscious of the influence he possessed. An infant of the same age, endowed with equal warmth of heart, but not sensible of having any influence, might have pitied the blind beggar, whom he heard in the fields so bitterly complain of thirst, and might have wished to relieve him,—but he would not have burst through the hedge, and seized the old man's hand, and eagerly bid him come with him to where he should have drink and

meat, and money to buy more for to-morrow. Blessed instance of the first ideas of influence being connected with the genial impulses of benevolence! Never, oh! never may the precious union be dissolved!

Birth, fortune, rank, talents, and virtue, have each a particular species of influence; but when they at any time happen to be united, the influence belonging separately to each is increased to an incalculable degree. Such persons are to society, not only the brightest ornament, but the most inestimable blessing. Their influence, like that of the sun, extends not merely to the surface; it penetrates into the dark and hidden places of the earth, diffusing energy and animation far beyond the situations on which it apparently shines.

As nothing can be more fatal than any degree of doubt with regard to  
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the reality of virtue, instances of pure, and disinterested, and exalted virtue, especially when they occur where temptations are known to abound, are highly and universally salutary. The more intimately we are acquainted with such characters, the higher will be our conception of their real worth, and, consequently, the greater the influence of their example.

For my own share, I confess that the happiness of numbering among my friends, my steady and affectionate friends, some of those in whom all the combined sources of influence have conspicuously united, has had the most beneficial consequences upon my mind. It has proved to me, that the consciousness of high descent, and elevated rank, and splendid fortune, does not necessarily give birth to pride: no, not even where,  
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in addition to these advantages, nature has bestowed the most transcendent talents, and the charm of every personal attraction! It has proved that when the principles of religion, truth, justice, honour, and integrity, have been early and deeply implanted in the heart, they will, in every situation, expel from it every impulse that is adverse to benevolence.

It is in such examples as these, that we behold the omnipotence of virtue. It is only where power enlarges the sphere of influence that it can be conspicuously displayed. But, alas! how seldom is it thus displayed! Nor can we wonder that it should be seldom, when we consider what little pains are taken to impress the mind with a proper sense of duty. Were the importance of the principles which we endeavour to inculcate, as seriously attended

attended to as they deserve, the assemblage of virtues which I have described, would, I am fully convinced, be more frequent than even the most sanguine can now suppose it to be. The influence of rank and fortune would then be exerted for other purposes than merely to promote the gratification of pride, or vanity, or selfishness. Nor would the consciousness of possessing influence, from whatever source, confer any elation of spirits, but in proportion as it was accompanied with the consciousness of employing it meritoriously.

Be it your care, then, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, to acquire betimes that steadiness of principle, which, as your influence extends, may not only give it stability and permanence, but may ensure to it a great and everlasting reward.

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In order to this, you must begin even now to consider whatever species of influence you imagine yourself possessed of, in the light of a talent bestowed by God, for the improvement of which you are to be strictly accountable. I know from experience how considerable is the influence which you already have obtained over the hearts of those to whom you have endeared yourself.

It is the sweet influence of affection, and will be most assuredly maintained by constantly exercising it in the cause of benevolence: not the benevolence of weakness or caprice, but the benevolence which accords with the genuine principles of truth and justice.

Let neither timidity nor selfishness prevent you, upon any occasion, from thus exerting it. In judging between your brothers, or your sisters,

or the companions with whom you associate, consider yourself bound to divest yourself of every degree of partiality; and wherever you are conscious of any particular favour or affection, take care never to speak upon the subject of controversy, until you have in your mind reversed the persons of the parties.

I trust you will never forget, that the extraordinary degree of influence which you now possess over the minds of your brothers and sisters, may be to them and to yourself an everlasting blessing; and that if you properly employ it, it will undoubtedly be thus to both. But it may also prove the reverse of a blessing both to them and you. It will prove the one or the other, according as you are yourself influenced by the principles which I so earnestly desire to have fixed in your heart. If the power  
which

which you have over them be employed to increase their happiness and virtue, your own virtue and your own happiness will be infallibly augmented and secured. Piety, truth, justice, and benevolence, will thus, by constant practice, become the fixed and permanent habits of your mind; so that, when the sphere of your influence extends, you may enter upon it in the full assurance of hope, determined so to employ every talent entrusted to your care, as to obtain the recompense of reward.

I must not omit observing, that there is a considerable influence attached to personal charms and accomplishments. This influence is, however, in general exaggerated far beyond the truth. But to whatever degree it extends, those who possess it are no less accountable for the use they make of it, than for the use  
which

which they make of talents or fortune. Instead of serving as an apology for the extravagances of folly, and the waywardness of caprice, it ought to be considered as an obligation to the practice of more than common prudence and decorum. The influence of beauty ought to be exerted in discountenancing levity, and giving additional weight to the dictates of wisdom and virtue. Its short reign ought to be spent in such a way as may ensure peace and satisfaction to the long period of life which may succeed its termination. But never forget that the influence which depends *solely* upon personal attractions, will, when personal attractions fail, be relinquished with anguish: and that in proportion as it was prized beyond its value, its loss will be deplored, becoming to the unfurnished

nished mind a source of real misery, and of ever gnawing discontent.

For the influence of talents we must likewise consider ourselves as strictly accountable.

Every intellectual endowment is a trust, for the employment of which we are to be responsible at the day of judgment. We are therefore bound so to employ our faculties, as appears likely to produce the greatest degree of happiness.

Neither the principles of religion nor justice permit us to employ our talents in the gratification of vanity, or pride, or any selfish passion; far less do they sanction our exerting them as instruments of revenge or of malignity. That we may innocently employ them in the cause of self-defence cannot be denied; but it is so difficult to draw the line, so difficult to

to determine where self-defence ends, and positive offence begins, that I am firmly persuaded it is better and safer to suffer wrong for a time, than to be over-anxious in our own justification.

Nor will the principles of justice permit us to enter the lists with an adversary of very inferior strength. Imbecility, rashness, and folly, though they neither palliate the atrocity of vice, nor excuse the malignity of deceit and falsehood, ought to excite so much pity for the offender as to restrain resentment. To employ our talents in exposing those who will so certainly expose themselves, would be equally superfluous and unjust.

If this argument be well-founded, it will lead to an unqualified disapprobation of all personal satire. Satire may with justice and propriety be employed

employed against sophistry and error, but never can it be employed against any individual with safety: never, indeed, is it so employed, that its darts are not dipped in malice. The influence of talents ought to be exerted for other purposes, than to obtain to ourselves the glory of a paltry triumph: and paltry and insignificant is every triumph, but those which we may contemplate with delight at the hour of death and in the day of judgment.

From what I have now said, you will perceive how often the practice of self-denial is enforced by the principles of justice. You will therefore learn betimes to submit to this necessary discipline of the will, so as to obtain a complete control, not only over the violent, but over the insidious passions. In order fully to accomplish this, you shall be furnished with

with still more powerful motives than any that have been yet advanced. But as I am extremely anxious that the first principles of religion and the first principles of morality should be deeply rooted in your heart, I shall, before we proceed to deeper themes, devote some letters to the illustration of what I have already stated.

The persuasion I cherish, that truth, in whatever form it comes, will have a ready access to your mind, is the only thing which could at present animate me to the prosecution of such a task. In the fulness of hope and of affection, I now subscribe myself my dearest Lady Elizabeth's sincerest friend.



LETTER VIII.

---

*My dear Lady Elizabeth,*

**I**F we would have the barriers which we erect to guard us from the encroachments of vice, so powerful as effectually to repel the adversary, we must take care to erect them on a solid foundation. We must likewise take care to fix them precisely in the proper place. But how, you may ask, are we to discover this? How are we exactly to ascertain the boundaries of vice and virtue? Are they not often fixed by opinion; and altered

tered by fashion; and modelled by situation? Is it not sufficient that we be always amiable, and that we never mean any ill; and that we make it a rule to do as others do, and just to take the world as we find it?

This indeed, my love, is not likely to be said by you, but it is the language of thousands. I shall now no farther observe upon it than to say, that they who thus profess only to please the world, must only look to the world for their reward. Beyond this world they need not look; for they have no right to entertain any farther hope. Every servant works for his own master; and from the master for whom he works he must receive his wages.

The precise boundaries between right and wrong, vice and virtue, require, it must be confessed, some accuracy of observation, some diligence

of research ; but if we believe that God — the omniscient and omnipotent God, is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, we shall be diligent, and take every means of informing ourselves upon a point of so much importance.

I am far from being one of those who feel it a pleasure and consider it a virtue to rail at the world ; but I think it my duty to examine the grounds of the world's approbation. Now it does not appear that the world has any business to enquire whether the qualities that render us useful or agreeable to it be genuine or otherwise. Neither is their real value of any importance to the world, so that they answer the purposes of general intercourse : — to be pleasing in our manners, and so decorous in our conduct as to abstain from all appearance of evil, are, with regard to the world,

world, the only essential requisites. A strict adherence to moral and religious principle, does not necessarily make us at variance with the world, but it makes all the little arts of pleasing it appear contemptible ; and obliges us to judge of the merit of our own conduct by a very different standard than the seeming approbation of that floating mass of idleness, impertinence, and vanity which in certain society is called *the world* !

If we heartily desire to be approved by God, our principles will lead us to be so careful of approaching the confines of vice, that we shall even watch our virtues with a jealous eye, lest they betray us into casual or habitual transgression. And, believe me, my love, this is no superfluous degree of circumspection. In our present imperfect state, our best qualities, unless directed by the firmness of

G 2                      principle,

principle, may betray us into the most fatal snares ; and without the exertion of vigilance and fortitude, the firmness of principle will never be obtained. Let then no sophistry persuade you that qualities so absolutely necessary to the preservation of your principles, can ever render you less truly amiable and engaging. If you always act as under the eye of God, they will be exerted naturally and without effort, and never beyond what the occasion calls for. You will then be diffident, where diffidence is becoming ; that is to say, upon all subjects on which others may be better informed than yourself ; but you will be firm in the performance of duty. The value of the mild and gentle temper which nature has bestowed upon you, will thus be enhanced rather than diminished, as it will give to the fortitude you evince in the cause of

of truth, a double lustre. The fatal consequences attending the want of the fortitude and vigilance which I have recommended, I shall now, according to my promise, exemplify, in such a manner as I hope may at once give some relief to the powers of attention, and tend to imprint the doctrines illustrated upon your heart.

I shall not, indeed, promise to tell my story with the same spirit as when surrounded by the charming groupe of happy faces whose sparkling eyes used, in expectation of the promised tale, to fix on mine with such avidity of delight : nor shall I be, as then, rewarded by the endearing caress, the kiss of gratitude and love. But as I shall hear nothing to the contrary, I may still flatter myself that the story which I am now to relate, may produce the request so often and so

sweetly urged, "pray, pray tell us  
" more." Let us, then, proceed to

*The Story of the tame Pigeon.*

Some years before you were born,  
a deep and universal regret was excited by the premature death of the Earl of N. a nobleman who had the rare felicity of being very sincerely and very deservedly beloved. An eulogium upon his character given in one of the newspapers of the day concludes as follows: "His Lordship is  
" succeeded in his titles and estates  
" by his only son, now in the third  
" year of his age. The present Earl  
" and his sister, who is in her sixth  
" year, are left to the sole guardianship of their amiable mother, a lady  
" no less distinguished by exemplary  
" virtue, than by her exquisite beauty,  
" splendid

“ splendid fortune, and brilliant accomplishments.”

This account of Lady N. was by no means exaggerated. She had hitherto performed all the duties of life in an exemplary manner. She had been an amiable daughter, a good wife, and a fond mother — but she had been neither one nor other from principle. She had only acted the part planned for her by others, and quietly gone on in the track into which she had fortunately been led.

For the sweetness with which she accommodated herself to the inclinations of her parents, and her husband, Lady N. had obtained much applause, and would have merited more than all the praise bestowed, had her obedience proceeded from a principle of duty ; but it was in her the offspring of indolence and timidity. She yielded, not to gratify others, but to save



trouble to herself. She consequently never had experienced the pleasure which glows in the breasts of the generous when conscious of having made a sacrifice of inclination to duty or affection.

Having been successively guided by the wisdom of judicious parents, and of a sensible husband, Lady N. had always appeared to act with uncommon prudence; but when left solely dependent upon her own judgment, she found that she had been very imprudent in never having given herself the habit of exerting it. She had had what is sometimes called a religious education: — that is to say, she had learned a respect for the institutions of the church, had learned to repeat her creed, and say her prayers, and to keep clear of all gross offences. But even these best impressions were rather adopted as prejudices, than embraced

embraced as principles. In the formation of principles, the heart and the understanding unite ; the adoption of prejudices is the work of the feelings and the imagination.

It has been observed of women, by a witty poet, (though in fact the observation is equally applicable to both sexes,) that

They who are born to be controll'd,  
Stoop to the forward and the bold.

Indeed, in the very nature of things, they who must be governed will fall under the dominion of the worthless ; for who but the self-interested and depraved will practise the arts necessary to obtain an ascendancy over the mind either of an equal or superior ?

Those who do not select from esteem, or esteem from real and ac-

curate observation, will be for ever liable to misplace their confidence. Such was the fate of Lady N. Her too great facility of temper rendered her an easy prey to the arts of the designing. Her principles were good; but they were not fixed in her mind with sufficient strength to be resorted to as the support and guide of her life. She thought it requisite for her to have some one on whom to lean, and indolently resigned herself to the first to whom chance happened to direct her.

Mrs. Pegg, the person who, after the death of the Earl of N. had the boldness to aspire and to gain her lady's confidence, was a woman of very low origin, but of very insinuating address. By pretending a more profound degree of sorrow for the death of her late master than was at all consistent with probability, she made

made her first approaches to her lady's favour. The grief of Lady N. was unaffected and sincere. She was soothed by the apparent sympathy of the hypocrite, whose tears flowed still faster than her own, and considered them as an infallible proof of the strength of her attachment.

Lady N. was not deficient in understanding ; but Mrs. Pegg was as much her superior in talents as in artifice. Had her talents been guided by principle, she would indeed have been a valuable acquisition in any family ; but her heart was corrupt and depraved : her talents were therefore employed to cheat, to circumvent, and to deceive. She soon penetrated into all the weaknesses of her lady's character, and with infinite dexterity turned them to her own advantage. Every thing at Castle N. was now placed under the control

of this ambitious woman. So complete was the ascendancy she obtained over the mind of her too easy mistress, that she neither heard, saw, examined, nor judged for herself. Every thing was left to Mrs. Pegg. All the servants, even the old and attached domestics of the family, were, one after another, on various pretexts, dismissed. Some Mrs. Pegg thought it dangerous to keep, because they knew too much of her real character; others were too unbending to be subservient to her wicked views: she therefore made use of the opportunity which constant access to her lady afforded, to prejudice her mind against them all.

Never, indeed, did Mrs. Pegg make use of her influence for the advantage of any human being. Never did she commend any one to her lady's favour on account of their

real worth ; or seek to lessen any one in her regard on account of any blemish in their moral character : all her motives were purely selfish. But if Lady N. had been possessed of the principles of justice, she would not have taken this woman's representations as sufficient evidence, neither would she have delegated to a mean and vulgar person that authority, for the due exercise of which, she was to be responsible at the tribunal of the Almighty.

The dread of giving herself trouble, would not then have appeared to her as a sufficient excuse for shrinking from those inquiries by which the truth would have been established ; nor would she have considered herself justifiable in giving up her own judgment, where she was called upon by Providence to exercise it.

With respect to her children,  
Lady

Lady N. was still more seriously to blame. She doated upon them to excess. Yet she did not give herself any trouble in the formation of their minds. She trusted every thing to Mrs. Pegg. "What could she do?" she said; "she never had been used to children, and did not know how to manage them: but happily Mrs. Pegg had been used to them, and therefore could not fail to manage them properly!"

Their first notions of right and wrong were consequently imbibed from Mrs. Pegg. Now it happened, that of right and wrong Mrs. Pegg had no other rule or standard than self-interest. Whatever gave her trouble was punished as a fault of the first magnitude. Whatever did not interfere with her ease or convenience was passed without notice. No idea of the consequences which false and  
injurious

injurious impressions might have upon the future character, entered into her imagination; nor, if it had, would it have disturbed her peace. The children might be false, cruel, capricious, proud, or obstinate, with impunity, provided they paid a proper respect to her, and never failed to observe her special orders; but no sooner did they transgress in this respect, than they were punished with unmerciful severity; and so completely did she keep the poor infants under subjection, that they dared not utter a complaint.

The children believed that their mamma's apartments were haunted by a secret spy; and in truth they were so; for the unprincipled nurse, not contented with the possession of her lady's unbounded confidence, took care, by means of listening, to inform herself of all that was going forward.

And



And such an adept had she become in this detestable practice, that a two-inch door was no obstacle in the way of her information. When she had, from any thing that passed, the slightest grounds for alarm respecting the continuance of her influence, she had immediate recourse to a method which she had ever found to be infallible. Lord N. or Lady Mary were, upon such occasions, the innocent sufferers.

As they were the objects of their mother's doating fondness, their slightest indisposition engrossed her whole attention; and upon such occasions her sole dependence was placed on the care, the skill, the wonderful management of Mrs. Pegg. No wonder, then, that Mrs. Pegg should be sometimes induced to make to herself an opportunity of evincing her skill and dexterity in their recovery; and

a

as she could do it at the expence of a little stomach sickness, the children were, perhaps, in reality, not much the worse for the experiment.

Mrs. Pegg was not, however, always thus fortunate in being able speedily to remove the effects of her own treatment. When her young lord was in his fifth year, he was seized with an inflammation in his lungs, which had nearly cut short the slender thread of his existence. It is impossible to describe the confusion and dismay which reigned at Castle N. during the anxious period of his danger. No eye (at least so Lady N. believed) ever shut in sleep ; no lips were opened for any other purpose but to sigh. How much the usual consumption of victuals was lessened, is best known to the housekeeper ; but certain it is, that among the numerous


merous train of domestics and dependants at Castle N. there were few who did not on this occasion feel deeply interested for their lady, or — for their young lord, or — for themselves !

We may believe that Mrs. Pegg would now act the part of grief to admiration. She indeed appeared to be almost distracted ; but she did not now act a part : her terrors were, for the first time, sincere. For, though her soul was of too hard a texture to be susceptible of the tenderness of affection, the fond mother herself was not now more truly anxious for her son's recovery than she was. Her attention was not however solely engrossed by the little sufferer. Lady Mary never experienced from Mrs. Pegg so much tenderness of endearment, or such unlimited indulgence as she now experienced. She was only entreated not  
to

to speak of her brother to her mamma, and she might have what she pleased.

Mrs. Pegg gave herself, in this instance, a great deal of unnecessary trouble. The poor child's spirits had been too effectually subdued by terror to betray any transaction which it was Mrs. Pegg's interest to conceal: nor did it, perhaps, enter into her mind to ascribe her brother's illness to any other cause than that to which she had heard it ascribed, viz. running across the lawn without his hat. But though Lady Mary might not know, or might not chuse to tell, I know, and I shall tell you how it really happened.

Mrs. Pegg's standard of right and wrong has already been explained. Now as the children could do nothing which produced so much trouble, to her as soiling or tearing their clothes, so no fault of which they were ever  
guilty,



guilty, was punished with half the severity. Lady Mary being of a timid and quiet disposition, was not nearly so apt to transgress in this way as her brother, who, while he was in frocks, was perpetually grieving Mrs. Pegg's righteous spirit by stains, and rents, most unfeelingly inflicted on her future perquisite. Nor when he exchanged the fragile muslin for the stouter trowsers, were her troubles at an end. Though he could no longer tear, he still could soil; and in those elopements into the garden or court-yard, which not all her vigilance could prevent, he would sometimes in running after a butterfly slip his foot on the fresh dug mould, sometimes in caressing a spaniel receive such a warm return of gratitude as left its visible effects behind; nor did he think of the consequences, until he beheld the marks of his favourite's


avourite's paws upon the fair nankeen, which he would then most willingly have exchanged for the coarsest linssey-woolsey that ever little boy was clothed in.

It happened on a luckless day, when, as Lady N. dined from home, Mrs. Pegg intended saving herself the trouble of dressing the children a second time, that Lord N. finding himself unobserved, and hearing the voice of Tom the stable-boy speaking to his tame pigeon, was tempted to slip down the back stairs to share with Tom the pleasure of feeding his Pet.

The pigeon was at first a little shy. It flew away at his approach, but being lured back by Tom, it at length became so familiar as to eat the corn which he scattered for it at his feet. Tom assured him that when a little better acquainted, it would eat from his hand with as little fear as it now did

did from his. Lord N. was very ambitious to rival Tom in the pigeon's favour, but in the eagerness of impetuosity he defeated his own purpose. The pigeon took fright and retreated. He pursued. Snatching the hat full of corn from Tom's hand, he followed the fugitive, coaxing it in such sweet accents as but one other little boy in the wide world could utter. The hard-hearted pigeon heeded not the music of his voice. It walked on till, turning into an inner court, it there took to its wings and flew to the top of the opposite wall. Poor N. rushed on unconscious of his danger, nor once perceived the heap of mud which had been that morning raked from a sewer, and lay directly in his way, and in which he would, the next moment, have measured all his length, had it not been for the agility of his companion, who, throwing himself before him, saved

**S**aved him from falling farther than his  
**k**nees. As he was not hurt, he would  
**h**ave joined Tom in the loud laugh  
 which he instantly set up, had not the  
 idea of Mrs. Pegg presented itself to his  
 affrighted imagination, banishing all  
 thoughts of mirth and gladness from  
 his mind. As he looked in sad dismay  
 on the woefully bespattered trowsers,  
 the roses forsook his cheeks, the ruby  
 lips grew pale, and the long dark  
 silken fringes with which nature had  
 adorned his seraph eyes, were mois-  
 tened with the tears of anguish. He  
 stood aghast and trembling; afraid  
 to cry, lest his crying should reach  
 the ears of Mrs. Pegg, and yet not  
 able to refrain from giving vent to  
 the misery which swelled his little  
 heart. At length he took courage to  
 turn his steps towards the house, sup-  
 ported by Tom, who was now little  
 less terrified than himself, though he  
 knew





knew not for what ; when, all at once the sound of Mrs. Pegg's voice broke in thunder on his ears, and her stately form was seen advancing towards them, clothed in all the majesty of anger. Lord N. now screamed outright ; but unmindful of his emotion she took him by the arm with one of those jerks which prove that dislocation is not so easily accomplished as some weak persons may imagine ; and giving Tom a box on the ear which sent him staggering to the other side of the court, hastily proceeded with the culprit to her own apartment. How she stamped and raged, and scolded, it is needless to describe, but as she had stamped and raged, and scolded at offences of the same kind before now, and as it proved without effect, she determined on a new method of punishment. Having stripped the unfortunate delinquent  
of

of his soiled garments, she put him in a corner, there to stand during the term of her pleasure, and then calmly left him, in order to resume the occupation in which she had been so disagreeably interrupted.

It was in the month of May. The sun was hot, but the east wind blew chill. The poor boy had thrown himself into a heat running after the pigeon, which had been increased by succeeding agitation, and from wearing coat and trowsers lined with flannel, he was now exposed, without defence, to the piercing air of an open window. The consequences are not so surprising as his recovery appeared to be to those best acquainted with his danger.

These consequences it is certain Mrs. Pegg did not foresee, but she made no scruple of doing under the eye of God, what she would not have done

under the eye of her mistress. And that she was conscious of doing wrong was evident from the rage she was in on finding that the situation in which she had left Lord N. was discovered by little Tom ; who, deeply interested in the fate of his young master, and directed by his lamentations to the scene of punishment, had adventurously dared, by the assistance of a step-ladder, to peep in at the window, through which he hastily offered all the consolation in his power, by assuring Lord N. that the pigeon should be his own.

LETTER IX.

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**W**HEN Lord N. was well enough to be taken out an airing, he went one morning with his mamma and sister, attended by Mrs. Pegg, in the landau, and was standing up by his mamma's side looking over the carriage, when it stopped so suddenly as to throw him off his balance, with a violence that might have been fatal, had not Mrs. Pegg's arm been ready to receive him.

The coachman at the same moment called loudly to some one to get out of the way. "*No*," replied the per-

son spoken to, "I will not get out o  
"the way. You may ride over me  
"you may trample me to death — bu  
"I will not stir till my lady promise  
"to speak to me."

Lady N. stood up, and on looking  
out perceived a little boy kneeling in  
the middle of the highway, which was  
in that part only just sufficiently wide  
for the carriage. She called out, "I  
know who it was. "It is little Tom  
"the stable-boy, please Your Lady-  
ship," said the coachman; "he was  
"turned away yesterday morning by  
"Your Ladyship's orders."

"I gave no such orders," said Lady  
N.; "let the boy come here to speak  
"to me."

"Bless me," cried Mrs. Pegg, "I  
"dare say Mr. Ditto (the steward)  
"has mistaken me. I told him yes-  
"terday that I was sure if Your Lady-  
"ship knew what a sad liar this little  
"fellow

“ fellow was, you would not keep him  
 “ another day about the house; but  
 “ I did not say Your Ladyship had dis-  
 “ missed him — I wonder how he could  
 “ mistake me so.”

“ I wonder so too,” growled the  
 coachman; “ I never knew Mr. Ditto  
 “ make blunders, nor did little Tom  
 “ ever tell a fib in all his life, as I  
 “ know of.”

Tom was by this time at the car-  
 riage-door, a piteous spectacle. Strip-  
 ped of his livery, and having out-  
 grown his former clothes, he had, in  
 order to secure himself from the in-  
 clemency of the weather, fastened his  
 old coat upon his back by bringing  
 the sleeves round his neck, and tying  
 them in a hard knot upon his breast,  
 where they conveniently hung, as  
 they now served the office of a hand-  
 kerchief, in wiping the tears from his  
 swollen eyes.

Lady N. could not but compassionate the little wretch. In a mild tone she desired him to tell what he wanted, but to be sure to speak the truth, for that she could not endure any one that told lies.

"No, my lady, Ize never told no lies since I was born, my lady. My lord there can tell you it was not I, was it, my lord? Pray tell your lady mamma; was it I that 'ticed you out the day you fell into the mud and dirtied all your clothes so? and when Mrs. Pegg was so hugeous angry? Do pray speak, my dear sweet young lord, was it I?"

"No," said Lord N. looking wistfully up in his mother's face, "indeed, indeed, mamma, it was not Tom's fault."

"I know not what you speak of, my dear child," said Lady N.

"I said so," cried Tom, "I said my lady

" lady knew nothing of the matter, I  
" was sure and certain, my lady, that  
" it was all a story of Mrs. Pegg's  
" own making, and that you never  
" would have had the heart, my lady,  
" to order her to twist off the neck of  
" my pretty pigeon."

" You little abominable lying vaga-  
bond," said Mrs. Pegg, lifting up  
her voice, and casting her indignant  
regards on the unfortunate outcast,  
" what is it that you dare to say of  
" me?"

" I say," cried Tom, agitated with  
fresh emotion, " I say that you said  
" as how that my lady said, that my  
" lord caught cold by following of  
" me; and that it was I that 'ticed  
" him into the yard, and that it was  
" by my lady's orders that you twisted  
" off the head of my pretty pigeon.  
" Lady Mary saw you do it; aye,  
" she saw you do it, and she saw you

H 4 " throw



“ throw the bloody head in my face,  
“ too, and heard you tell me that I  
“ should be served in the same way  
“ myself. And she heard you say,  
“ too, that it was all my lady’s orders.  
“ Did not you, my lady Mary? I am  
“ sure you will not say you did’nt.”

The poor Lady Mary, sadly discomfited by this appeal, sat trembling and silent. Three times the truth rose to her lips, and a voice within her heart told her that she ought to give it utterance. But a glance from the eyes of Mrs. Pegg silenced the feeble voice of conscience, and repelled the truth that sat upon the tongue. Lady N. looked at her daughter in surprise,  
“ and do you know any thing of this,  
“ my love?” said she, taking her kindly by the hand.

“ Do, pray tell,” cried Mrs. Pegg, in a tone which Lady Mary perfectly well knew how to interpret, “ did you  
“ ever

" ever see *me* do such a thing in your  
" life? *Me* twist off the head of a  
" tame pigeon! Do, pray tell, my  
" dear, I *insist* upon your speaking."

Lady Mary was still silent.

" Bless you, dear sweet young lady,  
" speak," cried Tom. " I am sure and  
" certain you can't have forgotten."

" Was there ever such impudence!"  
cried Mrs. Pegg in a voice half choak-  
ed with rage, " you little story-telling  
" villain, I shall know who it is that  
" has put you upon this." Then turn-  
ing to Lady Mary, whose hand she at  
the same time seized with vehemence,  
" tell this moment, I insist upon it.  
" Did you ever see me do such a  
" thing?"

" No," faintly uttered the too ti-  
mid Lady Mary: the consciousness  
of so flagrantly departing from truth  
and justice, dying her face with crim-  
son as she spoke.

“ Now,” cried Mrs. Pegg, in exultation. “ Now, my lady, I hope you will believe, I hope you see what a knave this is: if Your Ladyship chuses to listen to him all day you will have plenty of stories, I’ll be bound for it.”

“ You know it is no story,” said Tom, “ indeed, indeed, my lady, it is no story ; I have not a friend in the wide world, but God ; and my mammy told me God would be my friend while I told the truth. Indeed, my lady, I don’t lye, and if your ladyship’s honour will let me go back to the castle, I will bring proof that I don’t.”

“ What astonishing impudence !” cried Mrs. Pegg, turning up the whites of her eyes, “ I wonder how Your Ladyship can encourage such a depraved little wretch. I should hope Your Ladyship cannot possibly  
“ take

“ take his word against mine and Lady  
 “ Mary’s too ! Shall I bid the coach-  
 “ man drive on ? ”

Lady N. silently assented. The coachman smacked his whip. The horses darted forward, and poor honest little Tom was left a helpless orphan, destitute and forlorn, to seek his way through a world in which he saw hypocrisy and falsehood triumph over innocence and truth ; and in which he found the ear of the powerful to be only open to favourites and flatterers, even when justice and judgment lifted up the voice !

Had Lady N. been sensible of the fatal impression which her conduct at that moment made upon the mind of a fellow creature,—had she foreseen the consequences which ensued from depriving this, then innocent boy, of the confidence which he had been taught to put in the certain success

of integrity, she would have been struck with horror ! But though these consequences were too remote to be distinctly foreseen, she must doubtless be considered as responsible for them, in so far as she acted upon other principles than those which her heart and conscience most seriously approved.

She was in reality far from being satisfied that Mrs. Pegg was free from blame, and far from being convinced that the boy said what was false ; but she had not courage to pursue an enquiry, which, if it terminated to the disadvantage of her favourite, would disturb her own peace ; and which would at any rate give a sad shock to her poor nerves !

The principle of selfishness was, therefore, in Lady N. more powerful than the principle of justice. She had from youth been accustomed to cultivate

tivate the one, for it is evident that it had become a habit of her mind ;— and she had from youth been accustomed *only to talk* of the other, so that it had no real influence upon her conduct. Lady N. was mild, and amiable, and gentle, as heart could wish, yet here we see her guilty of an act of cruelty and oppression, of which a person of a less yielding disposition, and who had been actuated by steady principle, would never have been guilty.

Even for the crimes into which Mrs. Pegg was led, Lady N. was in a great measure accountable. Had she considered the influence she possessed as a trust received from God, a talent which she was bound to employ to the best advantage, she would not have deemed herself excusable in thus disposing of it. The ambition which led Mrs. Pegg from crime to crime,

would have been crushed in its very birth. Her talents would have been employed in their proper sphere ; and her merit judged of, not merely according to the height of its artificial gloss ; but by the rigid rules of truth and justice. The poor woman would by this means have escaped the misery into which she was afterwards led by the gradual but overpowering force of great temptations.

As to Lady Mary, we cannot but consider her as an object of pity. She had been told to respect truth, yet was placed in a situation where to speak truth required a degree of fortitude beyond her strength. She had never been taught the necessity of exerting it. But had religious principle been implanted in her heart, she would have felt that it was less daring to offend Mrs. Pegg, than to offend her creator and her judge. She would therefore

therefore at all events have run the risk of incurring Mrs. Pegg's displeasure, rather than soil the pure integrity of her mind, by giving utterance to a wilful falsehood. Granting that through timidity she had permitted herself to be inadvertently hurried into this grievous error; she would, upon reflection, have hastened to repair it, and by an ingenuous confession of the truth, have wiped the stain from her conscience. Thus would the principles of honour and humanity have been upheld by the principles of religion.

Happy they who are taught the practice, while they are initiated into the precepts of virtue! Happy they who at an early period, have acquired sufficient resolution to adhere with firmness to the principles in which they have been thus instructed!

The fruits of this firmness of mind  
are



are so admirably represented by a Latin poet, that I cannot better conclude this letter than by transcribing a translation.

The man whose mind on virtue bent,  
Pursues some greatly good intent,  
With undiverted aim,  
Serene beholds the angry crowd,  
Nor can their clamours force and loud  
His stubborn honour tame.

Not the proud tyrant's fiercest threat,  
Nor storms that from their dark retreat,  
The lawless surges wake ;  
Nor Jove's dread bolt that shakes the pole,  
The firmer purpose of his soul  
With all its power can shake.

LETTER X.

**I**N the story of "The tame Pigeon," I have presented my dearest Lady Elizabeth with an example of injustice, produced, not by the operation of any malignant passion, but merely by a deficiency in point of firmness. I have shewn that where fortitude and resolution are wanting, the knowledge of duty will not preserve from a failure in the practice of it, and consequently will not produce those habits of thinking and acting, which, from the constancy of their operation, are termed principles.

I shall now illustrate the force of these habits from characters of a stronger

stronger texture; and elucidate the consequences that attend them by relating a few anecdotes in the lives of two young noblemen of distinction, whom I shall describe under their christian names of Frederic and Albert.

In infancy these two young gentlemen were placed in circumstances apparently similar. They were alike subjected to the disadvantage of being almost entirely confined to the society of low-born and illiterate persons: for, except an hour or two of every day, they lived, as children in their station generally do, with the servants in the nursery\*. Happily, however, for Albert, he in the nursery met with an excellent instructress; it being his good fortune to have for an attendant one who considered herself

\* To this remark there are some very honourable exceptions.

as not merely accountable to her master and mistress, but accountable to God for the charge she had undertaken. This young woman was ignorant of the wisdom of the schools, but she was well acquainted with the precepts of the gospel: she had imbibed its spirit, and the law of God was written in her heart.

To the latest period of his life, Albert owned his obligations to this humble instructress of his infancy, whose declining age was more effectually cheered by the acknowledgments of his gratitude, than by all the favours his liberal heart bestowed. "By others," said he, "I was taught to say there was a God; from her I first learned to make inferences from the important truth. But for her I make no doubt I should to the present day have had my mind clouded by a thousand vulgar prejudices  
" and

“ and superstitions which would have  
“ taken too strong a hold of my ima-  
“ gination to have been eradicated;  
“ nay, but for her,” he would add with  
a smile, “ but for her, I verily believe  
“ I should have been a blockhead !”


A country gentleman to whom he  
one day made these remarks, as they  
returned together from a ride to the  
pretty cottage which was built by  
Albert for this old domestic, asked  
him, with some degree of astonishment,  
how it could possibly happen that one  
born in so high a rank should have  
been so much indebted to one in a  
menial station for all this instruction—  
“ Had not Your Lordship a tutor—  
“ Had you not masters to attend to  
“ your improvement ?”

“ O yes,” replied Albert. “ I had  
“ tutors and masters in abundance.  
“ But all for the head, and none  
“ for the heart. And how was I  
“ prepared

“ from any peculiar deficiency of in-  
“ tellect, but because my attention  
“ had never been directed to the exa-  
“ mination of any natural objects.  
“ Indeed, from my own experience  
“ and from all that I have since ob-  
“ served, I am inclined to think that  
“ much of the stupidity which we mis-  
“ take for natural deficiency, is purely  
“ accidental ; and solely owing to ne-  
“ glecting the faculties, till they have  
“ for want of exercise become ob-  
“ tuse.”

The gentleman fully assented to the observation, but still could not imagine how the misfortune should have been experienced by Albert ; or, if it was, how the person they had just seen could have contributed to remedy it.

“ I shall tell you,” replied Albert.  
“ I was just turned of six, when Bell  
“ came into the family, I had been  
“ taught



“ taught to read English by my sis-  
“ ter’s governess, who went over the  
“ routine of lessons, exactly as the  
“ horse which you see in yonder farm-  
“ yard, goes round in turning the  
“ threshing-mill. The horse thinks as  
“ much of the price of the wheat, as  
“ she did of the progress of the mind ;  
“ and, like him, when she had gone  
“ her appointed rounds, she thought  
“ she had fully done her duty.

“ In fact Mrs. Middleditch did all  
“ that could with justice be expected.  
“ She had served an apprenticeship  
“ to certain accomplishments, and by  
“ teaching them she was to gain her  
“ bread. To these her time and atten-  
“ tion had been exclusively devoted ;  
“ she considered them as her trade, and  
“ every thing beyond them as out of  
“ the way of her business. For above  
“ twenty years this woman had lived  
“ in the houses of persons of rank, an  
“ insulated



“ insulated being, removed to an equal  
“ distance from those above her, and  
“ from those below ; without ever hav-  
“ ing experienced the sympathies of  
“ friendship, or the heart-improving  
“ pleasure of a free communication of  
“ sentiment. In such a state the  
“ delicacy of the moral feeling can  
“ scarcely fail of being lost. Complete  
“ selfishness becomes in a manner ne-  
“ cessary. It was impossible that  
“ she should conciliate my affection  
“ who never treated me with tender-  
“ ness ; impossible that she should in-  
“ spire me with respect, whom I knew  
“ to be by others disrespected.\*

“ An

\* It is not to be supposed that Albert, in what he here said, intended to cast any reflection upon a very deserving and very unfortunate class of persons, among whom may often be found virtues of most sterling value, and talents of the highest order. He seems merely to allude to the



“ An accident of a broken leg  
“ which I got by a childish frolick,  
“ released me from lessons, and placed  
“ me entirely under the care of Bell,  
“ to whose watchful assiduity I was  
“ more indebted than to the skill of  
“ all my medical attendants. She  
“ gave up nothing to peevishness, no-  
“ thing to caprice; but without, on  
“ her part, exerting any of the ty-  
“ ranny of control, she taught me to  
“ control myself. She opened my  
“ heart to religious sentiment, she  
“ prepared my mind for religious  
“ truths. By a thousand ingenious  
“ contrivances, she elucidated things

situation of governesses in families of distinction,  
as unfavourable to the culture of the sympathetic  
and benevolent affections; and of the education  
which is thought to qualify them for the under-  
taking, as foreign to the cultivation of the heart  
and understanding.

“ that

“ that appeared at first so entirely  
“ above my capacity, as to have ren-  
“ dered the case hopeless to any that  
“ was not inspired with an equal  
“ zeal. I am even now surprised when  
“ I reflect on all that was taught me  
“ by this unlearned and simple girl ;  
“ for never through life have I been  
“ able to detect a fallacy in any of the  
“ precepts she enjoined, or to perceive  
“ an error in any of the judgments on  
“ which she had formed them.

“ During the two years that elapsed  
“ between the period of my accident  
“ and my being sent to school, a deli-  
“ cate state of health rendered it neces-  
“ sary that I should live much by the  
“ sea-side ; and thither I was attended  
“ by Bell, who had thus an opportunity  
“ of acquiring an ascendancy over my  
“ mind, which she used for the noblest  
“ purposes. Never have I in any  
“ station met with a person so com-

“ pletely devoid of selfishness : and  
“ the constant opportunity I had of  
“ witnessing the candour and single-  
“ hearted sincerity of her words and  
“ actions, rendered it impossible for  
“ me to be mistaken. But how could  
“ it be otherwise ? She lived under  
“ the constant consciousness of the  
• “ presence of the God she worshipped,  
“ and looked to him, not only as the  
“ judge of her actions, but of her  
“ most secret thoughts ; and, after  
“ all that I have seen of the world, I  
“ must confess I have ever found this  
“ the fountain of the purest honour,  
“ and of the soundest philosophy.”

By what Albert has here said of himself, you will perceive that in his childhood he was prepared for entering with advantage on the stage of youth. Nor did he make any retrograde steps in the course of improvement. In youth he found that he  
had

had still the remains of many bad habits to correct, many untoward propensities to conquer. That the time allotted him to prepare for the important part he was to act on the theatre of life, was short; and that much was to be crowded into the narrow space. He therefore set himself with assiduity to the task before him. When he was at any time induced by indolence to relax the vigour of application, or seduced by pleasure entirely to relinquish it, his principles opposed a barrier to seduction, and re-animated him to fresh exertion.

“ If I waste the present hours,” he would say to himself, “ what shall I be hereafter? Despised for my ignorance, and pitied for my folly. And will not God call me to account for thus neglecting to improve the talents with which he has entrusted me?”

These and similar reflections became, by their frequent recurrence, so habitual, as to operate upon his mind without his being conscious of their operation. His reverence for the Divine Being appeared innate and spontaneous, and was not affected by time, nor place, nor situation, nor circumstances. This is that fear of God which is spoken of in Scripture as the beginning of wisdom. Nor was it in the mind of Albert, nor will it ever be in any mind that has been duly prepared, a solitary principle. It did not lead to a cold and formal performance of duty, from a slavish dread of punishment. His heart rejoiced in the assurance, that the God who called him into being, intended that he should be happy; and had put it in his power to contribute to the happiness of others.

His father was proud of such a son,

son, (and what father would not have been proud of so fine a boy?) but Albert made no selfish or ungenerous use of his father's partiality. He considered the power it afforded him as a trust, for which he was responsible; and contrived to convert every instance of partial indulgence into a means of augmenting the happiness of his younger and less favoured brothers and sisters. They looked up to him, while he was yet a child, as a guardian angel sent to dispense felicity; and as he was the umpire in all their little quarrels, they learned from him, even in infancy, a strict sense of truth and justice.

It must be owned, that on certain occasions Albert was very deficient in the coolness which might have been thought becoming in a young philosopher. His feelings were too lively, his benevolence was too warm, to

endure the sight of misery. He could not bear to witness the infliction of punishment, even where he knew it to have been deserved ; and would rather have gone without his dinner for a week, than listened to the cries of one of his infant brothers in disgrace. This, in the eyes of some, may possibly appear a weakness. But from those who scoff at it as such, I should be glad to know, whether benevolence has ever taken deep root in any heart that was destitute of sympathy?

It is now time to see how Frederic has gone on. But he is too dignified a personage to be introduced at the end of a letter : so we shall, if you please, leave him for the subject of the next epistle.

## LETTER XI.

THE nursery education of Frederic differed in no respects from that of Albert, except that, as an only child, he acquired still higher notions of his own importance. He might from this alone have imbibed a sufficient quantity of self-consequence. Indeed, how is it possible that a child who feels itself the great and sole object of attention, should do otherwise! But, in addition to this misfortune, which it requires no little pains to counteract, Frederic had that of being for ever reminded



by those around him, that he was born to be *a great man!* that is to say, born to the inheritance of a great estate; for this was the only idea of greatness which any of the people about him happened to have. I must beg, however, that you may not from this imagine that Frederic was ever, *in direct terms*, told by any one, that his situation in life gave him a right to do what he pleased; but as every thing he saw and heard tended to inspire him with this notion, it amounted in reality to just the same thing.

He was taught to say his prayers; but in saying them his heart was never taught to rise with a sense of awe and gratitude to the great Being to whom they were addressed. Having learned to consider all that he enjoyed as a right, he looked on nothing as a blessing; and as for the

wants or miseries of others, it never entered into his mind that he had any business to feel for them; far less, you may believe, would he have entertained a thought of relieving them.

As he advanced in years, he enjoyed, as may be supposed, superior opportunities of improvement. He was placed under the care of able tutors, and might doubtless in youth have retrieved the errors of his childhood: and why he did not do so, appears at first view very unaccountable. He did not want capacity; he in a short time acquired, for his years, a considerable stock of knowledge. He was perfectly well acquainted with the nature of truth and justice, and the theory of moral obligation. He had read the lives of many illustrious men, and the precepts of many sage philosophers. He

had likewise been instructed in the  
 doctrines of revealed religion; and  
 never entertained a doubt of its truth.  
 But all this knowledge was to him  
 like the miser's treasure, which he  
 carefully locks up in his iron chest,  
 pleased with the idea of having so  
 much in his possession, but is so far  
 from using it, that he denies him-  
 self the common necessities of life,  
 and starves in the midst of plenty -  
 Of as little use to Frederic was ~~all~~  
 the knowledge he possessed. ~~On~~  
 reading of a noble and magnanimous  
 action, it never once occurred to him  
 to ask, "Is it thus that I would have  
 done in similar circumstances? Am  
 I capable of this generosity, or  
 this degree of self-control? Am  
 these the precepts by which my  
 actions have been governed? or, is  
 this the spirit I must imbibe before  
 I can be truly worthy?" Had he  
 frequently

frequently thus referred to his own heart, the notions of integrity and honour, which in the course of his education he could not help acquiring, would have been confirmed into principles. Still more effectually would they have been thus confirmed, had he considered the doctrines of religion as of practical use. But though he neither disbelieved in God nor denied the evidences of revelation ; his belief was too weak and desultory, either to purify his heart or influence his conduct.

His belief never restrained him in the career of passion ; it never occurred to check the impulse of any irregular desire ; and when the remonstrances of others, or his own conscience, told him he had done wickedly, it never prevented him from exclaiming, in all the arrogance  
of

of pride, "To whom am I accountable for my conduct?"

With grief the father of Frederic beheld the fatal consequences of his own too fond indulgence; but he had now lost all authority; for Frederic, at sixteen, was by the will of a grandmother put in possession of an independent fortune. He had lost his mother in infancy, and his father now married again; but though the connection promised to augment his domestic happiness, and was in every respect a suitable one, it unfortunately did not please his son, who thought he had a right to be offended, not because his father pleased himself, but because he had not consulted him.

It will to you, I am assured, appear extremely unnatural, that the partial affection of a father should meet with  
this

this unworthy return. It was not, however, in fact unnatural; for it was the inevitable consequence of the selfishness which that partiality had been the means of nurturing, while no generous principle had been implanted to check its growth.

Frederic and Albert were about the same time sent upon their travels; and though the estates of their fathers were contiguous, had seen little of each other till they now met in Germany. Each was accompanied by his tutor. The person who attended Albert in that capacity was far from being worthy of the important trust, to which he had been recommended by a nobleman who knew little of his real character. It was soon, however, discovered by Albert, who, through all his pretensions, saw the meanness of his soul. His principles were now too well fixed to be injured

injured by the society of one, who was as much his inferior in talents as in virtue ; but he confessed he could scarcely forbear envying Frederic on account of the advantages he enjoyed, in having as the companion of his travels, a gentleman of amiable manners, elevated sentiments, and highly accomplished mind.

It may appear extraordinary, that this gentleman should have been fixed upon by Frederic himself, as the only person with whom he would go abroad : and that he was in this so peremptory, as positively to tell his father, that unless he prevailed on Mr. Milner to accompany him, he never would quit England. But then it must be remembered, that Mr. Milner had just refused assent to a similar application from a nobleman of superior rank, of whom Frederic was particularly jealous, and over whom  
he

he considered it as a triumph to prevail. Mr. Milner's character too, his connections, his situation in life, and above all that spirit of independence, which rendered him so extremely reluctant to put himself in any degree in the power of another, were additional incentives, stimulating Frederic to such exertions as he never before had made in any virtuous enterprise.

Motives, indeed, of a nature far less excusable than any of those which I have now mentioned, were afterwards discovered by Mr. Milner: but those we have no business at present to disclose. Suffice it to say, that Mr. Milner, though he knew what Frederic's conduct had in some instances been, was from his conversation led to believe, that he had deeply repented of his former errors, and that he was now a convert to  
virtue,



virtue, upon conviction and principle. Animated by the hope of confirming him in his good resolutions, and warmed by contemplating the picture his imagination drew, of the beneficial consequences which might result to society from the character which, he flattered himself, he should in a great measure have it in his power to form, Mr. Milner, yielding rather to the feelings of his own heart, than to the solicitations of Frederic, consented to accompany him : he consented without, on his part, having made either treaty or stipulation ; nor did it ever enter into the old gentleman's mind to doubt the sincerity of the strong expressions of esteem and gratitude which his young friend so very liberally bestowed.

Mr. Milner had not seen enough of the world to distinguish between the complacency which arises from a temporary

Temporary triumph of the will, and that which is the offspring of genuine benignity. Frederic seemed to listen to his conversation with infinite delight. He acquiesced in the truth of all his observations, and perhaps felt for a time all that he seemed to feel. But the impression was not sufficiently deep, nor of sufficient duration, to change the long confirmed habits of his mind. He afforded an admirable illustration of the parable given by St. Luke, which under the figure of a house, out of which the evil spirit has been driven, describes the state of a man who has made a few feeble efforts at amendment.

As good habits (the furniture of the mind) cannot be immediately formed, the house remains for some time "empty, swept, and garnished." "Then returneth he," (the evil spirit,  
the

the predominant vice or passion,  
 “ and taketh to him seven other spirits,  
 “ more wicked than himself, and they  
 “ enter in and dwell there: and *the*  
 “ *last state of that man is worse than the*  
 “ *first.*” So it unfortunately happened  
 with regard to Frederic.

Albert, when he met with Mr. Milner and his pupil, was on his way to visit the silver mines in Hungary, to which he was led by the enlightened curiosity that inspires the true votary of science with an ardour which scorns to think of danger or fatigue. Yet natural history was to Albert only as a favourite amusement. It was a pursuit in which he delighted, and to which he destined his future hours of leisure, but to which he resolved never to give up a moment which ought to be devoted to the fulfilment of any important duty. In order to qualify him for assuming

assuming with becoming dignity that high place in society which he was soon to fill, he considered the acquirements of knowledge, in all its various branches, and the cultivation of taste in all its harmonious connections, to be essentially necessary. But he would as soon have thought of becoming a fiddler or a dancing-master, as a mere collector of shells and pebbles.

In little minds, even great objects become little, because in such minds all objects are connected with the littleness of self-important vanity. But when the heart and the understanding are equally enlarged, the elevation of mind that attends on scientific pursuits, becomes a source of pleasure, deeper and richer than any that selfish vanity or ambition ever dreamed of.

Frederic could not conceive what  
amusement

amusement Mr. Milner and Albert could find in exploring rocks and mountains, which appeared to him so wild and barren: but on hearing of the silver mines, he readily acquiesced in the proposal of visiting them, as he thought *they* certainly must afford something worth seeing. The questions he asked were numerous; but they were all confined to one point, viz. the sterling value: and often as the calculation was repeated, he never heard of the amount without wishing, with a sigh, that he too had a silver mine!

“ And why this wish for enormous wealth, my dear sir?” said Mr. Milner. “ Is not your present fortune sufficient for your present wants?”

“ O, I don’t want to spend more than I do just at present,” returned Frederic; “ but then with a silver mine! O how many things one  
“ might

“ might do with the revenues of a  
“ silver mine!”

“ Believe me, if you do not find  
“ satisfaction in making a good use  
“ of the fortune you already com-  
“ mand, you would feel no enjoy-  
“ ment in possessing the revenues of  
“ an empire,”

“ Sir,” replied Frederic, “ my for-  
“ tune is my own, and I spend it as  
“ I please ; and, thank God, I am  
“ accountable to no one for my con-  
“ duct !”

“ Not even to God himself ?” re-  
joined Mr. Milner emphatically. Fre-  
deric hastily let down the front glass  
of the carriage, and, though they  
were then going at a hand gallop,  
desired the postillions to mend their  
pace.

They travelled with great rapidity,  
and were already in view of the  
mountains, from whose treasures  
Albert

Albert hoped to add to his stock of knowledge, when an accident, which happened to one of the carriages, obliged them to stop for a few days at a village not many leagues distant from the principal mine.

The second day after their arrival at this place, Albert and his tutor, accompanied by Frederic and a person of the name of Snakeroot, a college friend of Frederic's, who had, *apparently by accident*, joined his party at the Hague, set out upon a long walk, to which Mr. Milner was unequal. The country was mountainous; but the scenery was romantic, and amply repaid them for the trouble they had taken in exploring it. As they were returning from their ramble, they were attracted by the roar of a water-fall, of which they determined to have a view; and, directed by the noise of the cataract, proceeded

proceeded through a deep valley into a narrow rocky glen, where they beheld the entrance into several mines. The whole appeared to them to have been long deserted. Nor did they observe the track of human footstep, except at one particular place, and in following it, they were led to the mouth of a deep and horrible pit, which Albert immediately conjectured to be the shaft of one of the copper mines, with which that part of the country abounded. Near the top of the dark abyss, a bucket, half filled with ore, was suspended by a strong rope from a windlass, which appeared to be worked by a wheel of complicated machinery. The construction of it was not understood by any of the party. A wish for information on the part of Albert, and a vague curiosity on the part of his companions, rendered them equally



eager to discover the secret spring by which the machine was to be set in motion; and in a fatal moment the discovery was made by both the young gentlemen in the same instant.

Albert would have paused for reflection, but Frederic was impetuously urgent to try the experiment without delay. The tutor and Snakeroot lent their assistance. The hasp was lifted. The bucket began instantly to descend with violence. The wheel turned furiously round. They had no means of stopping the frightful velocity of its movement, nor a moment's time to escape the consequences of its destructive force. It broke to pieces with a dreadful crash, and sent about the fragments of its broken limbs in every direction but that in which the travellers stood; so that they were saved almost by miracle from

from destruction. They all in the same moment thought they heard a groan issue from the bottom of the pit; but as no answer was returned to the earnest inquiries of Albert, they imagined they had been mistaken; and, greatly agitated by their adventure, hastened to quit the scene of their achievement.

On coming to the narrow pass by which they had entered the glen, and which indeed seemed to be no other than a fissure opened in the rock by some convulsion of nature, they observed a placard, which had before escaped their notice.

It began by enumerating the many titles of the high and puissant baron to whom these mountains and their mines belonged; and then prohibited, upon pain of confiscation of goods, and loss of life and limb, all persons, of whatever rank or degree, from

lines written by a stranger, and subscribed, in characters scarcely legible, by his father's hand, he, after having plentifully bedewed with his tears, placed on his bosom. The contents were, however, made known to all the party. His father assured him that he viewed the approach of death without dismay, though he confessed, that if it had so pleased God, he should have been glad to have seen his eldest son of age before he died, as on that circumstance depended his power of making a provision for his younger children suitable to their birth. He however knew, he said, the generosity of that heart to which he now commended them, and should say no more upon the subject. He then, after some tender expressions of affection, concluded by thanking God for having  
in

in mercy given him such a son, and on his head implored a thousand thousand blessings.

All was now in the hurry of preparation for Albert's departure. His carriages were drawn out, and only waited for the tardy postboys, when, as he stood at a window giving directions to his servants, Frederic and Makeroot being at another window in the same apartment, they saw a small party of armed men driving before them a prisoner loaded with chains, and followed by a sledge, on which lay a poor wretch apparently in great pain, and who was likewise in fetters.

The landlord, of whom they instantly inquired the meaning of what they saw, told them that these poor fellows were miners: that they were going to be shut up in one of the dungeons of the castle, and would probably

probably never more see the light of day; for that it was whispered the mines had not gone on well of late, and that the baron was in very bad humour; "and when that is the case," said Josephus, "we all of us know the consequences. His Highness cares no more for the life of a poor man than I do for that bit of straw," blowing away a piece that had been sticking to his whiskers.

"Well, but what have these poor wretches done?"

"O, a great deal of mischief, to be sure," returned Josephus: "they have betwixt them broke the piece of machinery that came all the way from Prague, for working one of the mines in Valla Petra. They both deny it; but there was no one else to do it; so it must either have been them or the devil. Indeed one  
" of

“ of them swears it was the devil ;  
“ and that had it not been for Saint  
“ Antony, who made him fall as he  
“ was running out of his way, the  
“ evil spirit would have crushed him  
“ to pieces with the bucket, whereas  
“ he had power to do no more than  
“ just to snap his thigh-bone in  
“ two.”

“ And did the poor fellow actually  
“ receive this injury by the fall of  
“ the bucket ?” exclaimed Albert.  
“ How shocking ! how dreadfully  
“ shocking !”

“ O the broken leg is nothing at  
“ all, please Your Lordship, to what he  
“ has yet to suffer,” said the landlord.  
“ Before it is set he will have the  
“ screws put upon his thumbs, I’ll lay  
“ my life for it ; and——”

“ Come, come,” cried Albert, in-  
terrupting him, “ let us hasten to  
“ save this poor creature from further

“ suffering. Would to God we could  
“ as easily relieve him from the pain  
“ of his broken leg ! Come, Frederic,  
“ we must make haste.”

Albert was already at the door,  
from which he was pulled back by  
his tutor, who warmly remonstrated  
on his rashness.

“ Think, my Lord,” cried he, “ think  
“ to what a risk you expose yourself.”

“ Yes,” re-echoed Snakeroot, “ pray,  
“ my Lord, think of the risk to which  
“ you expose yourself.”

“ And to which you would expose  
“ us all,” said Frederic. “ I confess,”  
added he, “ I have, for my share, no  
“ great taste for the pleasures of a  
“ dungeon. Think, besides, of being  
“ subjected to the insolence of such a  
“ fellow as this baron ! It would be  
“ quite intolerable !”

“ Think !” repeated Albert in-  
dignantly, “ think of an innocent  
“ person

“ person suffering on your account !  
“ Would not that be still more into-  
“ lerable ? ”

“ O but these fellows are used to  
“ it,” returned Frederic, affecting to  
laugh.

“ And consider,” said the tutor,  
“ how fully they would be recom-  
“ pensed by a little money.”

“ Yes, pray, my Lord, think of that,”  
cried Snakeroöt. “ Money, as this  
“ gentleman observes, will do any  
“ thing. By enough of that you could  
“ reconcile them to your breaking  
“ every limb of their bodies.”

“ And, Sir,” said Albert, I should  
“ rather have every bone of my own  
“ broken on the rack, than make such  
“ a despicable use of the advantage  
“ which fortune has given me over  
“ such miserable wretches ! What !  
“ have these men no feeling, because  
“ they happen to be poor ? Are they



“ to be permitted to suffer torture in  
“ order to save us from a little per-  
“ sonal inconvenience? To suffer,  
“ too, on our account! For shame,  
“ gentlemen. How can any of you  
“ think of such a thing?”

“ I think of nothing for myself,”  
replied the tutor, lowering his tone—  
“ but just at the present moment  
“ rather wonder you should seek to—  
“ be detained—detained, you don’t—  
“ know how long, when if my Lord—  
“ your father should in the mean-time—  
“ die, I——

“ I know what I should in this  
“ event endure, said Albert, firmly ;  
“ but dearly as I prize my father’s  
“ blessing, and much as I shall ever  
“ owe my father’s memory, I must  
“ not forget what I owe myself. I  
“ in this case clearly see my duty,  
“ and I shall at all events perform  
“ it. I go instantly to the baron’s,  
“ you

“ you may accompany me or not, as  
“ you please.”

“ You are quite right, my dear fel-  
“ low,” said Frederic : “ you don’t  
“ think I could be in earnest in op-  
“ posing you ? I swear I only wished  
“ to save you the inconvenience of  
“ delay ; but intended to surrender  
“ myself the moment you were gone.  
“ Nay, I assure you I did. Do you  
“ think I care for this paltry baron ?”

“ Pray stop, my Lords,” cried Snake-  
root, as the two young noblemen  
were leaving the room ; “ permit me  
“ to settle the business for you both.  
“ I shall go this moment to the baron’s,  
“ and take the whole upon myself.  
“ You shall have no farther trouble  
“ but to supply the cash.”

“ An excellent thought !” exclaimed  
Frederic ; “ you will manage it  
“ charmingly, Snakeroot, I make no  
“ doubt. But then, you know, you

“ must



" must swear you had no one with  
" you."

" O you may leave that to me,"  
returned Snakeroot, nodding his head  
significantly. " But what says Al-  
" bert?"

" I say," replied Albert, casting  
upon Snakeroot a look of contempt,  
" I say that I am not sufficiently  
" enlightened to perceive the differ-  
" ence between telling a falsehood  
" myself and permitting another to  
" tell it for me, and that I should as  
" soon be guilty of a base action,  
" as accessory to one."

Thus saying, he walked out, and  
was followed by the others in silence  
to the baron's hall, where they were  
admitted just as the unfortunate  
miners were sentenced to the torture,  
in order to extort from them a confes-  
sion of their guilt. The baron was  
still sitting in the seat of judgment,  
which,

which, on being informed of the rank of his visitors, he would have left, but was prevented by Albert; who entreated him to waste no time in superfluous ceremony, but to hasten to do justice to the innocent. He then turned to the miserable object who was stretched upon a litter, groaning under the pain of the fractured limb, and trembling with apprehension of still further tortures. Seizing his hard black hand, he kindly bid him be of good cheer, for that he should be taken care of for life.

While Albert was thus speaking comfort to the unfortunate miner, his tutor, anxious to exhibit his learning and talents, began to make in Latin a long speech to the baron. After a flourishing exordium, he came at length to state the facts, but gave such a colouring to the narration, as to make the lifting of the hasp appear  
purely



purely accidental ; asserting it to have been done by a jostle of his elbow.

Albert interrupted him.

“ I lifted the hasp,” said he, “ without thinking of the consequence  
“ But I was at some trouble to lift it  
“ so were we all. It did not fly  
“ by accident ; it could not.”

“ It could not, indeed,” exclaimed the baron. “ Noble and ingenuous youth, I respect your veracity  
“ You begin life in the career of honour and of glory. Happy the father of such a son !”

The baron then broke up the company, released the prisoners, and, having in the handsomest manner refused any compensation for the damage, gave Albert and his party a cordial invitation to spend the day with him, affording a notable proof that there is no mind so callous as not to be impressed by a generous and noble action.

Anxious

Anxious as he was to set out on his journey homeward, Albert did not omit to visit the poor lame miner, before his departure ; and though he could not at once unite the fractured bone, he lulled its pain by pouring an exhilarating cordial on the heart.

Mr. Milner heard with delight all the particulars of this transaction, and was greatly pleased to observe that Frederic spoke with admiration of the conduct of his friend. Snake-root took notice of it likewise, and was more loud than either in praise of Albert, " who, were it not," he said, " for a little vanity, would be an excellent young man. As to his being so willing to delay his journey, he owned he would have considered it in a different light but for the hint which his father's letter contained of adding to his sisters' fortunes. Albert was too prudent to like to  
" bind

“ bind himself by such promises. O  
“ yes, Albert was very prudent ! He  
“ would not hurry himself. Yet after  
“ all, he was an excellent young  
“ man ! ”

It is thus that the very praises of the malicious are converted into poisoned daggers, which give more dangerous wounds than the swords of avowed enemies. With this remark I should conclude the present letter, but that I think it may be of importance to your future peace to have it imprinted on your mind, that to detract from the merit of a noble action, by base insinuations with regard to the motive, is the surest sign of a depraved and corrupt heart. You may with greater safety take a viper to your bosom, than such a person to confidence.

Far, far be all the venomous tribe removed from those I love !

Adieu.

LETTER XII.

---

*My dear Lady Elizabeth,*

**F**LATTERING as it may be to me to imagine that you feel some desire to know a little of the subsequent history of the two young gentlemen whose opposite characters I have endeavoured to display, I must not at present permit myself the pleasure of gratifying your curiosity.

In my earnest desire to impress you with a thorough conviction of the importance of those first principles of religion and morality which form the  
basis



basis of every virtue, I have thought it expedient to make use of such illustrations, as might touch the heart through the medium of the imagination. Truth, in order to render herself pleasing to the youthful mind, must sometimes permit herself to be arrayed by the hand of fancy. When she appears thus decorated, some care is, however, necessary, lest the attention should be so much engaged by the drapery, as to overlook the symmetry and proportions of the figure which it conceals.

In order to prevent this, it is necessary to keep the "mind's eye" intently fixed upon the object proposed; to mark how far each circumstance corresponds with the general design, and how far it tends to place the truths it was its avowed purpose to illustrate, in a clearer point of view. When satisfied upon this head,  
it

it is then our duty to apply the moral to our hearts.

In the characters which I have exhibited, I have trusted little to fancy ; they have been sketched from experience and observation : but when characters are drawn for the mere purposes of illustration, nothing can be more absurd than to inquire when or where they lived, or indeed to mind whether they ever lived at all. The sole question to be asked is, whether such and such dispositions and opinions would naturally and inevitably lead to such and such consequences.

It is thus I would have you to examine what has been said of the characters now under review. It is thus, indeed, that I would advise you at all times to examine the purport of whatever is offered as an illustration of any moral truth. It is by exercising your judgment in this way  
that

that you can alone expect to reap any benefit from what you read ; and as I am very anxious to enforce upon you the observance of a practice which I believe to be so salutary, I shall, without making any apology for wearying you by repetitions, in-treat your attention to the following remarks.

We see in Frederic and Albert, two persons of very opposite characters. We have traced whence the difference arose. We have seen that though they had the same notions respecting right and wrong, the same ideas of truth and falsehood, of vice and virtue ; the same belief in the government of the Supreme Being, and of a future state, and of all the doctrines of Christianity ; this knowledge and this belief was in the mind of one, speculative opinion ; in the mind of the other, active principle.

The object of inquiry then is, whether this circumstance be in itself sufficient to account for such a difference of character as has been now exhibited? As our decision upon this point may be of great importance, it is necessary to proceed to the examination with all due seriousness and circumspection.

To aid our inquiry, let us see in what manner other powerful principles operate: that of self-preservation, for instance, the first with which we are thoroughly acquainted. It is a principle implanted in our minds by nature, but it is regulated by reason and experience. An infant, after having been burned, dreads the fire; but a grown person, of sound intellect, would shun the danger without having in his own person experienced the effects: nor would you or I, if, when we were walking at the foot of a precipice,

cipice, we saw a huge stone descending, stop to reason upon the propriety of getting out of its way. The principle of self-preservation would instantly inspire us with the desire of running off as fast as possible.

The desire of happiness is no less strong a principle than that of self-preservation: but our knowledge with respect to the means by which it is to be procured, is of less easy acquirement. It is a subject upon which we are extremely liable to be mistaken; and as all our mistakes upon it have the force of the principle from which they proceed, and to which they are united, they cannot fail to be attended with very important consequences,

Frederic, you will observe, placed all his happiness in the gratification of every selfish wish — the indulgence of every selfish passion. Albert looked beyond



beyond these to the approbation of God, and of his own conscience, and the esteem and love of his fellow-creatures. They pursued their different objects with equal ardour. Frederic, without having taken any pains to regulate his inclinations, implicitly obeyed them, and gave himself completely up to the present impulse. Albert permitted no desire to harbour in his breast, that interfered with the fulfilment of any duty which he owed to God or man. The pure principles he had embraced were cherished in a pure heart; and, by being always steadily adhered to, became in a manner intuitive: they no longer required the aid of reflection, but presented themselves uncalled for, to regulate every thought, every word, and every action. The principle of selfishness was to Frederic, what the principles of religion and virtue were to Albert.

It operated with the same force, and with the same certainty; so that none that were thoroughly acquainted with the two characters would have expected any thing but what was noble, and generous, and virtuous in the one, or been disappointed at meeting with what was mean, and sordid, and dishonourable in the other.

No, my dear child, there is nothing upon which we can so much depend as upon the uniform operation of long cherished principle. Virtuous habits that are merely produced by situation, will last just so long, and no longer than the situation remains unchanged. But when they are the effects of virtuous principle, they will be persevered in through every situation.

There is still another inference of much importance to which I would direct your attention. The knowledge of our duty, or, in other words,  
just



just and enlightened notions of our happiness, will not have in our minds the force of principles without some pains on our parts. The habit of referring to them, must be for some time persisted in, before they will have much influence upon our conduct. If we have not when young accustomed ourselves to do what was right, and because we knew it to be right, we shall very soon come to do wrong, though we know it to be wrong. Let, therefore, no day, no hour, nay, not so much as a minute of your time be spent without having been sanctified by a good intention. If you believe in God, and believe that he is ever present with you, let pleasing God be the constant object of your care. If I ask you how you may best please him; you will answer by the performance of every duty. The great duty of youth is a zealous im-



provement of every opportunity of instruction. Without applying the heart unto knowledge, knowledge will never be acquired; but to practise what we already know, requires no less zeal, no less diligence and application, than to make new acquisitions in information. Both ought to be considered in the light of primary duties; but the misfortune is, people too often imagine that if knowledge of duty is given, the practice of it will follow of course. I have therefore been at some pains to set you right in this particular; and hope I have succeeded in convincing you, that though knowledge may be in a manner forced upon us by others, we must, for the formation of our principles, be in a great measure indebted to our own exertions.

By the different views of happiness that are set before us, we may no  
doubt

doubt be greatly influenced; and hence arises the chief advantage of instruction; but after we are capable of reflection, we cannot avoid giving such consideration to these views as renders our adopting or rejecting them our own deliberate act. The views of happiness that are adopted by a mean and narrow mind, are constantly circumscribed within the sordid limits of personal and immediate gratification. The person who embraces more enlarged and generous sentiments, extends his views of happiness to objects that are in their nature infinite, and in duration eternal! I leave it for you to decide which is likely to enjoy the greatest portion of felicity.

In contemplating the opposite conduct of Albert and Frederic, you will not hesitate where to give the preference. But do not imagine that in

attaining that greatness of mind, for which he was through life remarkable. Albert was nowise indebted to his own exertions. Many were the temptations with which he had to struggle before his habits of virtue were sufficiently confirmed to afford him spontaneous succour and direction. Without religion these habits would never have been formed. Without religion they would not have had strength for the conflict. The advantages which he derived from religion we shall however leave for future consideration ; and at present confine ourselves to a view of the obstacles which he had to surmount in persevering in an habitual adherence to the first principles of morality.

From his rank in life, he must have been inevitably exposed to the seductions of flattery. He saw and felt that he was considered as a person

of some consequence by all around him. By the partiality of a fond father, his virtues were extolled, and his faults were palliated. But Albert examined the foundation of the praise which he received, and detected the exaggeration. He was therefore rather humbled by a sense of its being not fully merited, than elated by receiving applause beyond his deserts. From knowing that he could at an easy rate secure the approbation of a partial parent, he was taught not to trust to that approbation as a test of his real advancement in knowledge and virtue. From reading and from observation he collected the materials for a higher standard of merit; and though he continually fell short of the perfection at which he aimed, he with undaunted perseverance renewed his endeavours at attaining to it. It is thus that all

noble characters have been formed. I believe there is nothing more certain, than that those have ever fallen short of mediocrity, who did not raise their views very far beyond it.

As the family of Albert had long held a distinguished rank in society, its connections were numerous and powerful. But Albert resolved to rest his claim to respect upon his own individual merit; and when tempted to pique himself upon the claims of birth, he called to mind the numbers who, from having depended upon that claim, had sunk into contempt. He very early observed the difference of character that subsisted among those with whom he was connected; but was often tempted, by a natural partiality, to consider the vice or folly that appeared in any of them, as less vicious and less blameworthy than the vices and follies of others.

By

By a strict adherence to the principles of justice, he corrected this error. He was lenient to the faults of all ; but he endeavoured to see and to judge of things as they really were ; and thus, though no friend was ever more affectionate, he avoided being ensnared by his affections into the contagion of bad example.

Albert's love of truth led him from his early youth to prefer the solid esteem of such as were capable of appreciating his real worth, to the transient admiration of the fickle and undiscerning multitude. His manners were amiable and conciliating ; but it was rather from the gentleness of his disposition that they were so, than from any studied wish to please. He looked round him, and perceived, that though artificial characters might for a time gain credit with the world for more than they were worth, their mental

poverty never failed to be at length detected. He therefore never affected to appear other than he really was. He never spoke what he did not think. He never professed what he did not feel. He never promised what he did not mean to accomplish.

If you examine the conduct of Albert, you will perceive, that so far from losing any of the advantages of his situation, he increased their value. By adding the influence of virtue to that of rank and fortune, he extended the influence of the latter far beyond their usual bounds. He did this at the expense of a few sacrifices; for we may be convinced that it was not without some pains that he acquired such a degree of self-control as enabled him so firmly to adhere to his principles. But these sacrifices were made in the beginning of his course.

Believe

Believe me, my dear child, it is these first steps that are the most important of your life. Take their importance into consideration, and you will guard them with vigilance. Turn neither to the right hand nor to the left in search of by-paths to happiness. Seek for it in the strait road of virtue; and when you are tempted from your course, reflect upon the motives which induced you to enter it, and you will thus invigorate your resolution, "Finally," to use the language of the Apostle, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, I would lead you to think on these things. Those





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“ things which ye have learned and  
“ received I would have you do,  
“ and the God of peace shall be with  
“ you.”


Farewell !

LETTER XIII.

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**I**T may perhaps appear strange to my dear young friend, that I have avoided entering into any particulars, with regard to the studies I would have her to pursue, the books I would recommend it to her to read, or the opinions I would wish her to adopt upon subjects that have, to many instructors, afforded an ample field of declamation and controversy.

These particulars I might doubtless have expatiated upon much to my  
own



own satisfaction; but I must beg leave to doubt whether it would have been much to your advantage. The studies which I recommended, it might not be in your power to pursue; the books which I approved, you might never have an opportunity to read; and the speculative opinions to which I gave my sanction, might have been found, as speculative opinions generally are, in some points erroneous, and consequently untenable. I could doubtless, with very little trouble to myself, have made such a false but specious display of wisdom and knowledge, as would have excited your admiration, and raised your conception of the extent of my capacity and attainments to a height that would have soared far beyond the truth. Had the gratification of my own vanity been the object I had in view, I should have found my account

count in having recourse to such ingenious devices for establishing my pretensions. But what benefit would have resulted to you from all this? None, that I can see; except in as far as your vanity might have been gratified in having been the medium through which a lady apparently so wise and learned, chose to exhibit her attainments to the world.

By enforcing the principles which I had with so much success begun to unfold to you, I expect to render you a more essential service; and though in this I may deceive myself, I shall still have the comfort of reflecting, that as I was impelled to the task by pure affection, I have, in executing it, laid aside every consideration, but how I might render it most effectually beneficial to the dear objects of my tender love.

Rules, however judicious, are only applicable

eloquent tongue. But the praise that is due to eloquence ought not to seduce us from the duty that is due to truth.

The species of imposition to which I have just now alluded holds forth to vanity the alluring prospect of a triumph, purchased at so cheap a rate, that we cannot wonder so many should fall into the snare. Those who practise it will say in their defence, that it hurts no one : that the sentiments they borrow are intrinsically good, and that the knowledge which they retail as their own acquisition, loses nothing of its value from the deception. But does the mind that is thus practised in deception lose nothing ? Can the spirit of integrity remain unsullied amid the consciousness of perpetual imposition ? No : it is impossible. In every false appearance which we willingly

lingly assume, we depart from the principles of truth; and in every departure from these principles, we lessen their strength, and deprive them of their power over our hearts. And what do we gain by shining in borrowed plumage? We obtain perhaps a momentary admiration and applause. But if we excite expectations which we cannot realize, is there not some danger that this admiration and applause will soon be converted into contempt? Can we hope that those whom we have tricked into a high opinion of our abilities, or of our knowledge, or of our virtues, will not, when they discover how we have imposed upon them, be indignant at the imposition? In proportion as they had been induced to think better of us than we deserved, they will be inclined to think worse of us than we deserve: and thus whatever merit we

we really have, will fail to make the impression which it would have made had we been contented to assume nothing beyond it.

In justice to ourselves, then, we ought to be careful how we subject our pretensions to so severe a scrutiny. Let us adhere to the simplicity of truth, and we shall have nothing to apprehend. If we fail to produce admiration, we shall produce what is much better than admiration, solid and lasting esteem.

There perhaps never was a period when the general tone of manners was more adverse to the practice of strict and genuine sincerity than the present. Those who consider themselves sent into the world for no other purpose than to please the world, must take the manners of the world as their only rule of action. But even those who do not seriously think  
that

that the manners of the world will justify a departure from every duty, are too apt to deem them a sufficient apology for relaxing the strictness of moral principle.

Without setting up for a reformer, and without any intention of advising you to such a hopeless undertaking at any period of your life, I can have no hesitation in exhorting you to be upon your guard against whatever has a tendency to lessen the influence of truth upon your heart. A constant practice of perverting the use of language appears to me to have this tendency; and therefore, however it may be authorized by fashion, I would advise you not to fall into it.

To frivolous minds, that are incapable of reflecting upon any subject, the use of general terms affords indeed a great relief. Those who would find  
it.



it very difficult to tell why they are pleased or displeased, do well to shelter their want of discrimination behind a set of hyperbolical phrases, which their parrots could repeat with as good an emphasis, and apply with little less sagacity. But it is not from fools alone that we hear these exaggerations. Fools brought them into fashion, but fashion taught those who ought to set a better example to use the same language. Whatever falls short of expectation must be detestable ! Whatever affords a momentary pleasure must be exquisitely charming ! Whatever is in the least degree serious must be horridly stupid ! or shockingly dull ! It is thus that compositions of all sorts are judged of and pronounced upon, and this frequently at second-hand. And it would be well if these sweeping invectives were confined to such  
objects



objects of criticism. But it is thus that characters, as well as compositions, are by the lump applauded or condemned. I need not tell you that this is against the principles of justice. But it is an act of injustice into which many, who would not deliberately make a sacrifice of its principles, are insensibly led, by habituating themselves to the constant use of exaggerating epithets.

In order to avoid this error, young people ought very carefully to abstain from giving decisive opinions upon what they do not thoroughly understand ; nor ought they ever to give an opinion unsupported by a reason which can fully justify it. The impressions made upon the youthful mind by whatever greatly pleases or displeases, is sufficiently vivid to bear being expressed in the simple language of truth, without any danger

of its being mistaken. Accustom yourself then, I beseech you, to relate and describe with plainness and simplicity ; and depend upon it, that by so doing your descriptions will lose nothing of their force.

As to those who have cast off all regard to truth from their minds, and who believe that all are equally unprincipled as themselves, they will glory in deceiving, and expect to be deceived. The most dangerous deception which such persons practise, is that of assuming the appearance of perpetual enjoyment. Considering pleasure as the chief good, they seek it in the gratification of every selfish passion : but their vanity must likewise be gratified ; and therefore they wish to be admired, as the persons who alone have discovered the true arcana of felicity. When oppressed by a sense of weariness and disappointment—

pointment, they wear the smile of gaiety to hide their aching hearts. They are never happy; but it is the fashion to seem happy; and happy they must therefore, at all events, appear.

Against being deceived by this false appearance of happiness, I would anxiously warn you. I have heard it lamented by the blind, as a great misfortune, that from their being only seen when their spirits were exhilarated by society, they lost much of that sympathy which sensibility would have bestowed upon their situation, had the melancholy hours they spent in retirement been fully known. Were the gay votaries of pleasure to be as candid in their confessions, I believe the description of their lonely hours would prove them still more worthy of compassion. Could we read their hearts, should we then see them as

leading a life of perpetual joy? No. We should perceive nothing but the depressing consciousness of a gloomy void. We should only hear the fretful expressions of peevishness and discontent. To avoid this scene of darkness, they again dash into society, or busy themselves in schemes of avarice or ambition. Bursting like meteors from their cloud, they shine for a moment, and again are buried in the womb of night. Inquire of such persons if they have experienced heart-felt happiness, even when they appeared most happy; and if they have no interest in deceiving, they will frankly tell you *they have not!* Why then have they devoted their lives to the pursuit of empty phantoms of felicity? Because they were destitute of the principles which alone give strength to the mind, and enable it to pursue the glorious course  
that

**that leads to solid and everlasting joy.**

Let us now examine how far a strict adherence to religious and moral principle will detract from our enjoyment. Let us take a fair and candid view of the evils to which they will expose us, and give to every disadvantage its due and proper weight.

If we carefully avoid entering into any pursuit that is not sanctioned by God and conscience, we must, in many instances, give offence to the worthless. By not following the multitude to do evil, we obey a precept of religion, but our conduct will be considered by the multitude as a tacit reproach on theirs. Those who have no principle will endeavour to make a strict adherence to it appear ridiculous; to the propriety and decorum enjoined by virtue they will

give the name of prudery ; sincerity they will denominate folly ; and all regard to religion they will affect to consider as weakness. When wit gives to these representations her brilliant colouring, and raillery points their sting, it requires, we must confess, no small degree of firmness to remain unmoved.

The sneer of ridicule is keenly felt by ingenuous and ardent minds. The young ought therefore to be especially armed against it ; for I believe the fear of it to be the most deadly enemy to early virtue. Consider then who are these people who take upon them to sneer at you for choosing to avoid the path of levity and folly ? Are their characters such as should make you desirous of their approbation ? Is their conduct such as to render their approbation of any consequence ? If adversity were to overtake

ake you, are they the friends on whose judgment you would depend for advice? Are they those to whom in the hour of sorrow you would apply for consolation? No. Those who take upon them to ridicule the conduct that is guided by the integrity of principle, can have no real title to regard. They are, at the same time, filled with self-conceit, and stung with the consciousness of their own deficiencies. It is these jarring feelings which make them so very anxious to keep themselves in countenance, and to be kept in countenance by others; and how can they so easily effect this, as by throwing ridicule on the virtues which they have not the courage to imitate?

If the fear of ridicule should ever lead you to be ashamed of acknowledging that you are influenced by the fear of God, before you yield to



the temptation, consider which will expose you to the greatest evil. Remember who hath said, " Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God ; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Reflect likewise, that besides incurring the awful risk of being thus denied by the Saviour of the world, you, by every departure from your principles, lessen their habitual influence. Compare the inconvenience that may result to you from adhering to them at all events, and in all circumstances, with the consequences that will infallibly attend their dereliction, and I am persuaded you will be at no loss to determine which of the evils you ought most anxiously to avoid.

An earnest desire of doing good to  
others,



others, a desire necessarily attendant on the principles I have endeavoured to enforce, may sometimes, it must likewise be confessed, expose us to evils from which the selfish are exempted. Those who are completely engrossed by their own interest are not only less liable to imposition from their superior sagacity in detecting it, but are less liable to be selected by the designing as objects on whom their artifices may be exerted with success. An open temper and a generous heart will be more apt to fall into the snares of the crafty and perfidious than dispositions of an opposite cast; and will consequently be exposed to many a wound from which those who are for ever clothed in the armour of suspicion will undoubtedly escape. But though a hearty interest in the happiness of others may lead us into much trouble, and eventually produce

duce to us loads of care, of sorrow, and disappointment; and though it cannot be concealed that sincerity may sometimes create to us more bitter enemies than were ever made by dissimulation; still the balance of happiness will preponderate on the side of virtue. Were we to leave all idea of a future state out of the account, it would, taking in the probability of a long life, thus preponderate. For though by a firm adherence to moral integrity we may sometimes incur present inconvenience, and suffer from the sacrifice of present inclination, yet upon the whole, the advantages which will result to us, from the esteem and confidence which a course of virtue naturally inspires, will far outweigh all that we can possibly lose by pursuing it.

But "life may be short, the present  
"moment


“ moment only is ours, and there-  
 “ fore the happiness of the present  
 “ moment is all our aim.” Let us,  
 then, obey the impulse of our pas-  
 sions. If we are offended, let us  
 avenge the offence. Let us fill our  
 breasts with hatred and malice, and  
 exert our ingenuity to give them  
 vent. If we are proud, let us gratify  
 our pride at the expense of the feel-  
 ings and of the interest of others;  
 and those whom we cannot rise above,  
 let us endeavour to degrade. Let us  
 despise the virtue that is a reproach  
 to us; and the characters which we  
 cannot injure by our contempt, let  
 us endeavour by our calumnies to de-  
 stroy. Our time, our health, our  
 fortune, let us waste, as folly may  
 dictate, or as selfishness may prompt  
 us. And then, if true wisdom con-  
 sists in only consulting the happiness  
 of the present moment, who shall

blessed, we must exclude them from our bosoms.

To regulate these passions and affections, becomes therefore a duty arising from the principles of justice. In justice to ourselves we must endeavour to subdue them ; for, if benevolence, humility, charity, meekness and forbearance, have a tendency to increase our happiness, we cannot in justice to ourselves neglect their cultivation. Formed as we are formed, this would be true, though we were persuaded that we had been thus formed by chance, and that God neither observes our conduct, nor will call us to account for our actions. But if we believe that there is a God, and that there is a future state in which we must be for ever happy or for ever miserable, the duty which we owe to ourselves, wears a still more serious aspect.

The

The use which we make of the short period of probation, fixes our fate to all eternity. This period has, as I in a former letter observed, been divided by God into several distinct parts, through which we proceed progressively to that final close, beyond which we know nothing more than God has been pleased specially to declare. Not only each of these stages of existence, but every moment spent in each of them, takes something of its colouring from the past, or gives a colouring to the future. The manner in which the hours of youth are spent, has in general an influence upon every future hour. If the habit of acting up to the degree of knowledge possessed be not then acquired, it will probably never be acquired ; and present convenience or present inclination will consequently



quently become the sole principle of action.

To begin then by times to examine your own heart, and to reflect upon the motives and the consequences of your conduct, is but doing justice to your future days. If you look up to God as the witness of your actions, and to Heaven as the scene of their reward, your motives will never fail to be pure, and in their purity you will find consolation even for the errors of your judgment. But the same good principles which lead you to reflect upon your motives, will lead you to improve your judgment, by employing every opportunity of instruction to the best advantage.

I address myself to you as if you were self-dependant, and as if you were to be indebted to yourself, and  
not

not to the care of your friends, for the formation of your principles. But you must see that I do this, not from any doubt of your receiving from them all the instruction possible, but from a conviction that the application of their instructions rests entirely upon the exertions of your own mind. Even the obedience due to those whom Providence has ordained to be the directors of your conduct, will be the more steady and uniform from its being the result of principle. From a principle higher than that of fear, I would have it to proceed. By connecting it with the idea of the duty which you owe to God, it will acquire strength and stability, and prove the means of increasing your benevolent affections, by the consciousness of having given satisfaction to those who are interested in your improvement.

By



By connecting the idea of every duty with the approbation of God, and of every departure from duty with his disapprobation, your principles will soon acquire strength to resist temptation. But upon what grounds does this connection rest? Upon what authority do we with so much certainty pronounce our assurance that God will visit the wicked and reward the just? This, my love, is a very serious inquiry, and one upon which too much depends to be slightly answered. By giving you a clear and comprehensive view of the basis of our faith, I hope to assist you in answering it to your satisfaction.

You will then find what reason I had to assure you, that it is from religion the principles of truth and justice derive their best support. In the view I shall give you of that religion,

ligion, you will see, that to those who receive and cherish it, it must infallibly become a source of happiness, never to be exhausted ; a source of hope, which, when the world smiles upon us, will prevent us from being fascinated by its smile ; and when it frowns, will save us from being dejected by its frowns.

May the efforts of my zeal be guided by the influence of that Spirit of truth which can work conviction where earthly wisdom fails ! And may a blessing from Him who is the God of truth follow my labours !

Adieu !

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Strahan and Preston,  
Printers-Street, London.

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LETTERS,  
ADDRESSED  
TO THE DAUGHTER  
OF  
A NOBLEMAN,  
ON THE  
*FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL  
PRINCIPLE.*

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By ELIZABETH HAMILTON,  
AUTHOR OF  
"LETTERS ON THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF  
EDUCATION," &c. &c. &c.

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*THE THIRD EDITION.*

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

**O**F natural religion — founded on belief in God and a future state of rewards and punishments — Inquiry into the state of natural religion prior to revelation — Gross misconceptions of men respecting the Divine attributes — Introduction of barbarous rites in religious worship — Errors of idolatry perpetuated during the most enlightened æras of Greece and Rome — Opinions of philosophers respecting a future state, vague and speculative — Not influential on moral conduct — Of the religious principles of the Jews — The simplicity and sublimity

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LETTER

## LETTER I.

---

*My dear Lady Elizabeth,*

WHEN I recollect the earnest attention with which you have often listened to me, upon subjects of importance to your temporal and eternal welfare, and recollect the respect you seemed to have for my opinions, and the grateful sense you shewed of the affection which led me so anxiously to examine the nature of those which you embraced, I cannot but indulge a hope of your having bestowed se-



rious considerations on the foregoing letters.

The consequences which result from a [fixed, a constant, and an ever-operative belief in the immediate presence of God, and a future state of retribution, have, I hope, been so fully displayed, as to enforce conviction. We are now to inquire upon what authority this belief rests ; an inquiry of great importance, since, according to the solidity of the basis on which we found our faith, will be the strength of the principles that proceed from it.

The wise and good of all nations, and in all ages, have professed to believe in the being and attributes of God, and in a state of future rewards and punishments ; and as the reasons for this belief are thought to be obvious and natural, it has taken the name of *natural religion*. Though  
firmly

firmly persuaded that a knowledge of the existence of a First Cause was transmitted from our first parents, and disseminated by tradition through all the various tribes and nations into which their posterity was divided, I shall adhere to the term *natural religion* in speaking of these first principles of faith, and go on to shew you what were the consequences it produced.

Supposing it to have been already proved, that a constant belief in the presence of an invisible and all-powerful Being must inevitably have a considerable influence upon the conduct, we must at a glance perceive that the influence which it has, will be either beneficial, or otherwise, according to the notions entertained of the character of this great Being.

Now it appears, that of the nature  
 B 2 of

of the Deity, reason could discover very little.

The goodness of God is indeed evident in the works of creation ; for, as the Apostle observed to the citizens of Lystra, “ God left not himself without a witness, in that he did “ good, and gave us rain from heaven, “ and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts “ with food and gladness.” But these blessings, from the regularity with which they were dispensed, and constancy of revolution, seemed to require no immediate operation of divine power ; and were expected and received as things of course. It was in the earthquake and the whirlwind, the destructive tempest and the raging storm, that the power of Deity appeared conspicuous ; nor was the hand of God seen or acknowledged until terror shook the feeble heart. To pacify the wrath of this avenging spirit was then

then the sole object of religious worship ; and horrid were the rites to which this mistaken notion of the divine nature gave rise. Altars raised to the God of heaven were polluted by human blood. Nor was it the blood of enemies alone that flowed upon them. The innocence of infancy, and the bloom of youth, as offerings of higher value, were deemed more acceptable in the eyes of an avenging Deity ; and such was the power of superstition in eradicating those tender affections which seem most deeply implanted in the human heart, that parents resigned their children to the murderous knife, in the full persuasion that they should most certainly recommend themselves to the favour of the Deity, by stifling every emotion of humanity.

Such cruelties could not fail to make the people cruel ; nor could

they be just, who believed that God delighted in injustice.

After the lapse of many ages, a few nations of the world became more enlightened. Literature and the arts, wherever they were introduced, ameliorated in some degree the ferocity of the human mind. By the exercise of the intellectual powers, the heart was softened and enlarged; the sensibility of the moral feelings was restored; and such of the moral virtues as were found necessary to the existence and happiness of society, were strongly enforced, and in some instances eminently practised.

You may perhaps imagine, that when reason had thus far advanced, those who made such distinguished use of her powers must doubtless have employed them to advantage in discovering the attributes of the Deity, and in forming such a rational system  
of

of religious worship as would improve the virtue of the people. Alas! reason atchieved nothing of all this.

Of all the ancient nations, none were more celebrated for their wisdom than the Romans: but how little a way this wisdom had penetrated into divine things, is well known to all who are in any degree acquainted with history. A very brief and apposite account of it is given by St. Paul, in his Epistle addressed to that nation, in which he justly reproaches them. " Because that when they  
 " knew God, (or might from the  
 " works of creation have known  
 " him,) they glorified him not as  
 " God, neither were they thankful,  
 " but became vain in their imagina-  
 " tions, and their foolish heart was  
 " darkened. Professing themselves  
 " to be wise, they became fools; and  
 " changed the glory of the uncor-

“ ruptible God into an image of corruptible man, and to birds, and beasts, and creeping things.”

These are the people to whose superior genius we are indebted for almost all we know ; — great in all the arts of war and peace ; renowned for wisdom and for penetration ; whose daring minds were free, and at full liberty to search for truth, and to declare it. If their notions of the Supreme Being were so unworthy, if their worship was so impure, well may we say, with David, “ Who can *by searching* find out God ; who can find out the Almighty unto perfection ? ”

Their belief in a future state was, like their belief in the Supreme Being, darkened with many errors ; and, as it was not capable of receiving any confirmation from the evidence of the senses, was less generally received ;  
and

and even where it was received, was very uncertain and confused.

By wise and thinking men, however, it was observed, that vice naturally brought some degree of misery upon the offender, and that virtue naturally produced some degree of happiness to the virtuous; and as neither the punishment nor reward were in this world perfect, but even seemed in some cases, to be reversed, they thence inferred that there must be a state of existence beyond the grave, in which the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice should be full, inevitable, and complete. By this mode of reasoning, a few philosophers convinced themselves and others, that they should, after death, be required to give an account of their actions: but this conviction was not by any means so powerful as to have much influence upon the conduct. It had no



better foundation than probability and conjecture ; and consequently was rather received as an opinion than cherished as a principle. It afforded a theme for declamation, but it never awakened the conscience : it neither inspired the energies of hope, nor the horrors of despair. It was wished by the virtuous to be true, because it was their interest to find it so ; but the records of antiquity do not afford a single instance in which this belief evinced its power by breaking the chains of vice. No : it is beyond a doubt, that had the world never been favoured with farther light than human reason could elicit, neither the desire of God's approbation, nor the dread of his displeasure, would have had sufficient strength to overcome the force of corrupt habits, and to control the influence of vicious inclinations.

H

If the notions entertained by the most enlightened pagans, of the nature and government of the Supreme Being, were so unworthy, and appear to us so weak, it is evident that we must, in some way or other, have arrived at superior information.

We have seen that natural religion, as far as it rests upon the authority of human reason, or, to speak more correctly, when it has been corrupted by the gross depravity of human imagination, has no connection with moral principles; we have seen that it was thus corrupted among the heathens, and consequently, that it lent no assistance to the morals of the people, whose virtue would not have been in the least improved by having the belief which they professed confirmed into a principle of action.

Let us now inquire whether this was universally the case throughout

the earth ; and whether, in these ages of religious darkness, there was any nation or people who believed in God as a God of truth and righteousness, a punisher of iniquity and a rewarder of virtue.

This inquiry will immediately lead us into an examination of the history of the Jews, the only people whose religious faith gave any essential support to moral principle.

The Jews were neither warlike nor literary. They were neither celebrated for wisdom nor for genius ; nor were they held in high estimation by any of the surrounding nations. Yet, while the rest of the world remained in a state of profound ignorance concerning the origin and end of all things, and the superintending Providence by which all is governed, this despised nation possessed such sublime and elevated conceptions of  
the

**the power and government of God, as were evidently beyond what had ever been obtained by the human mind. From what source they derived this superior knowledge, it would indeed be extremely difficult to discover, nor could we even form a conjecture upon the subject that would not outrage all the laws of probability. But happily we are not left to the uncertainty of conjecture. By the providence of God, the account has been preserved to us in such a perfect state, as to give entire satisfaction to every unprejudiced and candid mind.**

In the books of the Old Testament we learn, that while it pleased our heavenly Father to discontinue all immediate and perceptible communication of his will to the rest of the inhabitants of the earth, he perpetuated the knowledge of himself, by a  
special

special revelation, to one particular race: and that, for the preservation of the light he had thus graciously dispensed, he renewed from time to time by his servants, the prophets, the prof- fers of grace, and the promises of mercy; and by these inspired men existed the fervent hope and expecta- tion of a Saviour and Redeemer, in whom, not only the Jews, but all man- kind should be blessed.

“ He who in times past spoke to  
“ the fathers by the prophets, hath in  
“ these last days spoken to us by his  
“ son.” In all that he hath thus  
spoken, there are some things hard  
to be understood; some things which  
man, in his present imperfect state,  
must necessarily be unprepared to com-  
prehend. But let us see whether this  
ought to surprize us?

I have already shewed you, that  
the knowledge gained in childhood,  
though

though in no respect full nor perfect, is of importance in preparing the mind for a fuller use of its powers in the period of youth ; and that the knowledge acquired in youth, though different in degree, and of greater moment, must still, in many instances, remain to be perfected in a state of maturity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that this progressive state of the mind goes on beyond death and the grave ; and that the wisest of the sons of men, in the full vigour of his faculties, is, comparing all he knows with all he has yet to learn, but as a child, proud of being able to point out the first letters of the alphabet ?

In all that the Bible teaches concerning what God has revealed to us of the scheme of providence, nothing is rendered entirely clear, but what  
affords

affords us essential aid when relied upon as a principle of action. As every successive generation which has, or which is to exist on this globe, till the determined period of its dissolution, are but parts of one great whole, all equally present in the mind of Him who inhabiteth eternity; and as all this mighty whole makes but a part of the scheme of the universe, it must be in vain for us to attempt comprehending a plan so vast, so inscrutable, so "past finding out."

Any one who has ever made the attempt of explaining to children some particular parts of subjects, which stood connected with others, that from their ignorance and want of capacity they could not understand; and who has patiently listened to all the objections, and tried to reconcile  
all

all the difficulties which this ignorance and want of capacity occasioned, will have a proper notion of the nature of those objections which human weakness urges against the divine authority of Scripture, on account of the seeming difficulties with which some things in it are attended.

You, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, have the advantage of bringing to the important inquiry, on which we are about to enter, a pure and unprejudiced mind. You will easily perceive the folly and impropriety of rejecting with scorn, or pronouncing with arrogance, upon such parts of these high themes as are involved in obscurity. Continue, upon such occasions, to act as you have hitherto acted, and you will avoid the errors into which pride and ignorance are so apt to fall. You remember the  
book



book of natural philosophy into which you used sometimes to look, and in which you occasionally met with passages that you read with much delight, though you seldom could go through half a chapter without finding something which you were obliged to pass as unintelligible, for want of previous information. The chapter upon optics in particular, concerning which you were extremely curious, you found you could then make nothing of. But what was the consequence? Did you take upon you to deny the truth of what the learned author had advanced upon any of these subjects, because it was not level to your apprehension? Did you say that you knew yourself to be a judge of what you could not judge, and pretend to decide upon what was, and what was not properly stated, concerning things  
of

**O**f whose powers and properties you were utterly ignorant? No! With characteristic modesty you confessed the subjects to be above your comprehension; and, feeling your deficiency in respect to the knowledge requisite to qualify you for entering on the abstruser points, you referred them to a future period; resolving meanwhile, by diligence and application, to prepare yourself for receiving further information.

How wise! how just! is the beautiful and striking observation of our Saviour, with respect to this ingenuousness of disposition: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that unless ye become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Docility, charming as it is in youth, is no less necessary towards the improvement of our riper years.  
When

When with youth we lose all teachableness of disposition, our case may indeed be reckoned hopeless; for how shall we then prepare for that future scene, for which the present is meant to educate us? If we become careless or intractable; as the opportunities of improvement increase, the opportunities of improvement will to us have been enlarged, in vain. We shall remain confined to the narrow space which we had in youth been forced to cultivate; and when the period arrives in which we must render an account of our transactions, find that the only acquisition we have made, consists in having added presumption to ignorance.

Persevere then, my most engaging young friend, persevere in the path on which you have already entered. So shall you go forward from strength to

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to strength; advancing in wisdom and knowledge, until you arrive at that blessed state where both shall be perfected.

Adieu !

LETTER II.

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I HAVE already observed, that the belief in a Supreme Intelligence and in the immortality of the human soul, were doctrines so consonant to reason, and which were so spontaneously adopted by the human mind, as to be termed the religion of nature. I have likewise shewn, that wherever the light of revelation was withdrawn, these first principles were so corrupted by the passions and the imagination, as to  
be

be disjoined from all connection with the moral principle.

I come now to lay before you the substance of the knowledge obtained through the medium of divine revelation, an account of which has, by the providence of God, been preserved to us in the Bible. We there find, besides much valuable information, additional strength bestowed on all that reason had suggested, and additional light given upon points which were of too much moment to be left involved in the uncertainty of conjecture.

By the religion of reason it was taught, that the formation of the world, and of all that it contains, must necessarily be the work of a powerful and intelligent being. The Bible confirms the interesting truth. It gives us a sublime description of the manner in which this world was,  
at

at the fiat of Omnipotence, called into existence ; a description so clear, as to be level to the comprehension of the ignorant ; so full of grandeur, as to claim the admiration of the most enlightened.

Wherever the human mind had arrived at such a state of cultivation as to be capable of exerting its reasoning powers, there were some who argued upon the probability that God who made the world, continues by his providence to govern it ; and that he is consequently an invisible and ever-present witness of human actions. To the rational faculties of man, God afforded sufficient light to render this probable, but it was by revelation only that it could be ascertained, and by revelation it has been ascertained.

We learn from the Bible, that in the beginning of the world the Supreme  
Being

**B**eing vouchsafed to give proofs of his immediate presence, not only to the understanding, but to the senses. **B**y immediate communication, he instructed the parents of the human race. He informed them of their fallibility, and of the state of probation in which they were placed, and warned them of the penalty they would incur through disobedience. Nor when the penalty was incurred did he withdraw the proofs of his superintending care from the guilty sufferers. Hitherto he had appeared to them in the attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness ; they were now to see him as a God of justice and a God of mercy.

Justice pronounced the awful sentence of condemnation ; mercy presented the cup of hope.

The account handed down to us, in the book of Genesis, of the creation



and fall of man, is so very brief, that it must of necessity be obscure. But this briefness and obscurity are additional proofs of its authenticity. If you ever become acquainted with Oriental literature, you will perceive, that events which are stated by Moses within the compass of a few sentences, would have been amplified into volumes, had imagination been permitted to have any share in making up the record. Nor is the obscurity in which the inspired historian has left all that it imported not our happiness to know, a less decisive proof of his fidelity. Events transacted in a state of existence dissimilar to that in which we live, must necessarily be attended with circumstances impossible for us to comprehend. Supposing it possible for us to have access to the mind of an unborn child, and that its reasoning faculties were

were as strong as those of a man in the prime of life, how should we describe to him the objects by which we see ourselves surrounded? How should we persuade him that those little eyes, which had hitherto been shut in darkness, were the organs by which this glorious scene was to be surveyed; that they would open on the luminaries of heaven, to behold the brightness of the sun, and the mild radiance of the silver moon, and the earth clothed in verdure? How should we give him him any idea of the change of seasons, the vicissitudes of cold and heat; to say nothing of the more complicated ideas of society?

With respect to any state of existence that is in its nature essentially different from the present state, we are no less incapable of forming any conception. All our arguments concerning it must therefore be futile

and absurd. A state of perfect innocence, such as we are told our first parents enjoyed, and a state of perfect happiness, such as we hope hereafter to enjoy, are equally above our comprehension. Enough concerning them has been revealed to confirm our faith, but not to satisfy our curiosity. We must, however, observe, that though with regard to the state of innocence, the memorial appears obscure, and even imperfect, no obscurity rests upon the transactions immediately subsequent to its loss. And here another proof of the authenticity of the record occurs to me, which, though unsupported by authority, I shall have the temerity to mention.

In pronouncing sentence upon our first parents, the Supreme Being is represented as dooming the first transgressor to an additional load of suffering

tering and sorrow; but at the same time, and as if to prevent the consequences of despair, as holding forth to her a peculiar hope.

We have here a lesson which ought, in my opinion, to be inculcated on every female heart. If properly applied, it would teach the woman who repines at want of power, and who boldly assumes it as her right, to be humbled by the remembrance of her sex's weakness. It would at the same time prevent any from sinking under a painful sense of inferiority. Let her who, thinking meanly of her sex, relinquishes all hope, all desire of improvement, let her remember, that when the first pair stood before the tribunal of an offended God, though the weakness of the woman was not accepted as an apology for her guilt, yet, that to her was granted the promise of salvation,

and that she was expressly told by the voice of Omnipotence, that it was the "seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's heel."

Would it ever have entered into the imagination of *uninspired* man, to have represented the Almighty as speaking thus? No. Had this history been compiled by human wisdom, from the inventions of human imagination, we should doubtless have had a very different account of this awful and important sentence, in which justice and mercy are so conspicuously mingled. We should have seen the woman represented as seducing and seduced: the first accounted for by her charms; the latter by her weakness. We should have seen her represented as the cause of ruin; but we should never have heard of her being declared the medium of restoration to the human race.

The

The traditional account which descended to the Eastern nations of the primæval state of man, and of the events which preceded and which immediately followed the deluge, are thought by many learned persons to form the basis of almost all the mythological fables of antiquity; and it may hereafter afford an agreeable exercise to your ingenuity to trace the resemblance. We may be convinced that some memorial of the facts was thus preserved, but being entrusted to human care, it was soon overwhelmed by the loads of absurd fiction with which it had been decorated by human imagination.

Whatever knowledge might have been obtained by tradition of the facts, it is in the Bible alone that a satisfactory account is given of the designs of Providence in relation to them. It was ordained by God, that

such an account of them should be preserved to us, as, while it afforded little gratification to a vain curiosity, and offered but a slender basis for the theories of fancy, should, to the latest ages of the world, be a pillar of faith.

All that we find in the Bible, relative to the earlier ages, is accordingly confined to a mere outline, respecting such events as are not intimately connected with the grand object of revelation, viz. the birth, the office, and character of the Messiah.

In all that remains to us of the history of the antideluvian world, we still observe the same sublime conceptions of the Divine attributes, which are peculiar to holy writ. We there behold the Almighty revealing himself to Noah as the avenger of sin, the abhorrer of iniquity. We see him holding forth promises of grace

to the penitent, and denouncing severe judgment upon the disobedient; and, after the terms of mercy had been rejected, ordaining the execution of the threatened vengeance.

From the brief account that is preserved to us of these important though remote transactions, it appears that temporal rewards and temporal punishments were all that God had as yet seen fit to reveal. It is sufficient for our instruction, that the punishment inflicted was such as God had foretold it would be. Sin had brought death into the world. From this universal doom, Noah and his family were not to be exempted: but while they were only to be made subject to the general law, which, from its being general, is called the law of nature, the others were made subject to that particular and extraordinary operation of Divine power,



which we call miraculous. Under the former, death steals with silent steps, and as it were weeds the decayed plants from the garden of creation, and at such intervals that they are scarcely missed: under the latter, he was sent forth armed with terror, to destroy at once every living thing from off the face of the earth.

How far the impression made by this awful instance of Divine wrath operated upon the descendants of Noah, or how long it had any influence upon their conduct, makes no part of our present inquiry. We confine ourselves to the account given us in Scripture, of the particular interpositions of Providence for the instruction and salvation of the race of man.

The next event after the deluge, in which God is represented as interfering

fering in a miraculous manner, is that which occasioned the dispersion of mankind, upon which many ingenious hypotheses have been built. It is for you and me sufficient to know, that the human race were early dispersed, and that different languages were spoken by the inhabitants of different countries ; and as we may be assured that neither of these circumstances would naturally have taken place, we can have no difficulty in believing that he who gave to man the use of speech, and who designed him to cultivate the world, might so controul the faculty he had bestowed, as to facilitate his purpose.

From the time that our first parents were driven out of Paradise till the calling of Abraham, we hear no mention made of the promised Messiah. When, after the deluge, God made a covenant with Noah, the promise

which it contained extended only to temporal blessings. It was promised, that " while the earth remaineth, " seed-time and harvest, and cold " and heat, and summer and winter, " and day and night, shall not cease : " and that neither should there be any more flood to destroy the earth : it was promised that the inhabitants of the world should never again be all at once destroyed by a deluge of waters ; but concerning him who was to destroy the power of death, the voice of God was silent.

As the treasurers of that *promise of hope*, God raised up a peculiar race, declared from the beginning to be ordained and chosen for that particular purpose.

Abraham, appointed to be the father of this race, is represented as a man of extraordinary piety and virtue ; for such alone have ever been  
the

the favoured of heaven. To him the promise of salvation, made to our first parents, was renewed by a special revelation ; and to give him a greater degree of interest in the event, he received an assurance, that from him the promised Messiah should descend. The terms were neither figurative nor obscure, for it was *expressly* declared, “ that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.” And to ascertain the truth and certainty that the promise thus made to him was no delusion practised on the imagination, it was accompanied by the notice of an unhopèd-for event speedily to be accomplished.

Abraham had then no child ; for his wife Sarah, now a very aged person, never had brought him any offspring. God promised that they should have a son. The promise was fulfilled ; and in the birth of this son


son Abraham received an assurance that all which God had said should come to pass.

That the faith of Abraham might descend as an inheritance to his posterity, the events which should befall his family after his decease were foretold with the utmost clearness and precision. The country which he then inhabited was promised by God to the descendants of Abraham, who were there to live a distinct and chosen race, appropriated to the service of God, and destined to preserve the knowledge of him from becoming extinct, or corrupted by the absurd inventions of human pride and ignorance. And, lest they should forget that the land promised as a possession was the gift of God, the fulfilment of the promise was referred to a distant period, and not to take place till the fourth generation.

We

We may be assured that the children of Abraham, and his children's children, were well instructed in all the particulars of this extraordinary revelation, which was to them so full of hope, and in all respects so interesting. And we accordingly find that the patriarch Jacob was so strongly impressed with it, that he on his death-bed took an oath from his sons to bury him in that land in which God had promised that in a future age his family should be established.

In the course of time, however, this impression was nearly obliterated. The posterity of Abraham forgot the promised land, the destined place of their inheritance; and were so base as to be contented in a state of slavery and bondage. From this state of subjection they were rescued by Moses, whom God raised up as a deliverer,



deliverer, and endowed with power to work such miracles, as should sufficiently attest his divine mission. He who is the ruler of all events might doubtless have brought this to pass by means of wars and revolutions, such as have taken place in all ages of the world, and in which one event seems to grow out of another, as a natural and unavoidable consequence. But a gross and sensual people would not in this have seen the hand of God; they would have taken to themselves the glory. God therefore brought them unto that land, which he had promised Abraham to bestow upon them, not by the ordinary course of events, but by an open display of the interposition of Divine Providence, which, whenever it is thus displayed, is called miraculous. “ By signs and by wonders  
“ and by an outstretched arm, did  
“ the

“ the Lord God bring his people out  
“ from among the Egyptians.” The  
power which he exerted in doing  
this was so evident to their senses,  
that it could neither be mistaken nor  
denied. Well might the venerable  
lawgiver, to whom was assigned the  
arduous task of leading and instruct-  
ing the unruly multitude, well might  
he appeal to those who had been  
eye-witnesses of the awful scenes.  
“ Ask now,” says he, “ of the days  
“ that are past, which were before  
“ thee, since the day that God  
“ created man upon earth ; and ask  
“ from the one side of heaven to the  
“ other, whether there hath been any  
“ such thing as this great thing is, or  
“ hath been heard like it ? ” What  
is the conclusion, what the inference  
which he desires them to draw from  
all the mighty miracles which they  
had seen and heard ? “ Unto thee it  
“ was



“ was shewn that the LORD HE IS  
“ God—there is none else beside  
“ him : Know therefore this day, *and*  
“ *consider it in thine heart*, that the  
“ Lord he is God : in heaven above,  
“ and upon the earth beneath, there  
“ is none else.”

The miraculous proofs of his immediate presence which the Almighty vouchsafed to the Israelites, and to which Moses here appeals, were not given to gratify an idle curiosity, or to solve *unreasonable* doubts ; they were only such as were necessary to establish a certainty that the laws and ordinances given through Moses were from God.

Without such proofs of almighty power as were obvious to the senses, laws such as those promulged by Moses, would never have been accepted by a gross and ignorant people, whose minds were incapable of  
con-

Conceiving the meaning of ceremonies and observances, which in general had a reference to a far distant event. God therefore saw fit, in ushering in what is aptly termed the law of works, to make a display of that power, which, while it only operates by general laws, works unthought of and unseen, but which, to the reflecting mind, is no less wonderful in the formation of the simplest flower, or in the organization of any living creature, than in all the mighty things which he did in the sight of our fathers "in the land of Egypt and in the field of Zoan."

The promulgation of the law of Moses forms such an interesting epoch in the history of the world, *as God's world*, and has in it so many circumstances which it concerns us to know, that it must be made the subject of another letter. Permit me, however,  
to

to recommend to you never to lay down this or any book of instruction without fixing in your mind a summary of what you have been reading. Consider its purport and its tendency ; reflect upon the arguments which have appeared to you most convincing, and treasure them in your heart.

May God in this and all things bless you.

Adieu !

LETTER III.

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UNDER a full conviction of the advantages that result from having a clear, distinct, and comprehensive view of Divine revelation presented to the mind of youth, I shall, in the prosecution of my plan, endeavour to simplify the subject as much as possible. I am nevertheless still sensible that in order to embrace these general views, the faculties must be exerted with a degree of vigour, such as I cannot now expect my dearest  
Lady

Lady Elizabeth to possess. Some passages will, I am persuaded, excite attention; but the unremitted attention necessary to grasp the whole, it may not be in your power to command. You must therefore return to it, and by repetition you will impress it upon your mind. I beg you to recollect how many things, that at first view appeared totally above your comprehension, you by degrees got so thoroughly acquainted with, as to wonder how you could have remained so long in ignorance concerning them. Recollect how much you used to delight, when, in comparing your present ideas with the past, you were sensible of the acquisitions you had made, especially with regard to such branches of knowledge as had at first appeared most difficult; and let the remembrance of these circumstances encourage you to apply your mind  
to

to the subject now before you, which is of infinitely more importance than any in which you can engage.

We have already seen that the revelation which God dispensed to Abraham was clear and definite; but we have no reason to believe that it was attended with any very extraordinary display of the Divine majesty. The events foretold could only have been foreseen by Divine omniscience, they could only have been accomplished by Divine power: Abraham had a full conviction that they were revealed by God, and this conviction was all that was requisite.

And here I must request you to observe the remarkable correspondence which appears between the ordinary and extraordinary dispensations of Providence; evincing that the general laws by which they are regulated are (if upon such a subject I may presume

presume so to express myself) conducted upon the same principles.

By those who have turned their observation to the works of God in the wonders of creation, it is universally allowed that nature bestows nought in vain. Her frugality has excited an equal degree of astonishment and admiration. Throughout all her works, nothing superfluous, nothing unnecessary, is to be found; and so fully is this now understood, that, among the investigators of nature, none are so presuming as to pronounce any thing useless, because they have not been able to discover its use: such presumption would be considered as a proof of ignorance; but humility is the companion of knowledge and of wisdom.

The works of nature are therefore to be considered as a revelation of the Divine power and wisdom.

All

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
 Whose body nature is, and God the soul ;  
*That* chang'd through all and yet in all the  
     same,  
 Great in the earth, as in th' æthereal frame ;  
 Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,  
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,  
 Lives through all life, extends through all  
     extent,  
 Spreads undivided, operates unspent,  
 Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,  
 As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart ;  
 As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,  
 As the rapt seraph that adores and burns ;  
 To him no high, no low, no great, no small ;  
 He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.\*

The same God who spake in thun-  
 ders from Sinai feedeth the young  
 ravens when they call upon him.  
 And if from all we see and know we  
 have reason to be convinced that he  
 doth nothing in vain, we ought to  
 be assured that if he ever made an  
 extraordinary display of his power,

\* Pope.



it would be upon the same principle; that it would be intended to answer some specific purpose; and that it would be adapted to the end proposed.

To such acts of Divine power as are out of the common course of nature, and are wrought for any particular purpose, we give the name of miracle; but we should do very wrong to imagine that it required any effort in the Divine Being to operate in one way more than in another. Who shall presume to say that we, or any living creatures, nay that the world itself, or any of the thousands of worlds that roll around, could continue to exist for a single moment without a special act of Divine power?

The general laws that govern the universe give such an appearance of regularity, that we are apt to forget that these laws are only modes of  
1 acting

acting — to be employed, or to be suspended, or to be abrogated, as it shall seem good to him who has appointed them. We expect the return of day and night, of summer and winter, because we have been accustomed to see them return; but that they do thus return, is no less the act, the special act of Omnipotence, than that will be which shall arrest the planets in their course, when the mighty angel from Heaven shall “swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more.”\*

God, in mercy to sinful man, saw fit to preserve a knowledge of himself in one particular nation; and not only so, but to preserve in that nation the expectation of an event which was in its consequences of universal and of infinite importance to the human race.

God, in revealing himself to Abra-

\* Rev. of St. John.

ham, renewed the promise of salvation. But the faith of Abraham's posterity concerning the fulfilment of that promise, depended on their experiencing the accomplishment of the promises in which they were immediately concerned. It was therefore necessary that this should be so fully established as to remove the possibility of doubt; and that infidelity might have no excuse, the descendants of Abraham, now multiplied into a great people, were brought forth from the country which had been their residence for so many years, by a miraculous interposition of Divine power.

Moses was chosen by God to be the messenger of his will, and the leader of his people; but that he was so, they did not believe till after many and repeated proofs. Now it is evident that God might have given them this assurance by means of a miraculous

lous

ious impression made on every individual mind ; but he who in the works of nature displays his wisdom in the apparent simplicity of the means, his power in the grandeur of the effect, ordained that the Israelites should be convinced of the Divine authority of his messenger, by proofs submitted to the investigation of the senses.

Having led them into the wilderness, to a distance from all that might disturb their attention, the Almighty now proceeds to institute those laws which were to serve the several purposes of enlightening them concerning the Divine nature and government, of confirming all that reason had ascertained of moral truth ; of keeping them a distinct and separate people, appropriated to the special purpose of being the conservators of the promise of redemption ; and of preserving in the world the knowledge of the one

true God, until that promise should be accomplished.

A slight consideration of these several particulars will serve to convince us of their importance. With regard to the knowledge of God, the light of revelation which had descended by tradition to all the nations of the earth, had become obscure, and so far corrupted by human inventions, as to be, to all moral purposes, nearly lost. A belief in the existence of some superior intelligence was, indeed, preserved; but how little was known concerning the nature of the Supreme Being is evident from the nature of the worship instituted in his honour. Reason taught the human mind to embrace a belief in the Creator, but how little did it teach concerning him! Reason could not declare whether it was not one God who made the sun, and another

other who made the moon, and another who formed the earth. Nay, reason could not ascertain whether these useful orbs were not the gods who made the world!

With regard to the moral qualities which are essential to the existence of society, reason had been taught by experience to appreciate them with tolerable accuracy; but it was no slight thing to have all that reason ascertained concerning them confirmed by express revelation. And as to the method appointed by God for the pardon of sin, and the justification of transgressors, it is evident that it could never have been discovered by other means than immediate communications from the Divine Being. Let us then with humility adore and reverence that goodness and mercy which, in compassion to our infirmities, vouchsafed, by the splendour of revelation, to lend

assistance to reason's feebler beam. Had not this revelation been given in splendour, it would have failed of producing its effect. But we shall in examining the circumstances be sensible that however awful, however sublime or magnificent, neither the terrors nor the magnificence displayed, were more than was demanded by the occasion.

In the third month from the period of their departure from Egypt, God intimated to Moses what were the peculiar designs of his providence with regard to the people whom he had so miraculously delivered from a foreign yoke.

They (the Israelites) were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched their tents in the wilderness before the mount. " And Moses went up " unto God (*i. e.* to worship God in " prayer), and the Lord called unto " him

" him out of the mountain, saying,  
 " Thus shalt thou say to the house of  
 " Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.  
 " Ye have seen what I did unto the  
 " Egyptians, and how I bare you on  
 " eagles' wings, and brought you unto  
 " myself. Now therefore if ye will  
 " obey my voice indeed, ye shall be  
 " a peculiar treasure unto me above  
 " all people, FOR ALL THE EARTH IS  
 " MINE, and ye shall be unto me  
 " a kingdom of priests, and an holy  
 " nation."

Here we see that God leaves it to  
 their free choice to refuse or to ac-  
 cept the terms proposed ; and that this  
 choice might be entirely uninfluenced,  
 the proposal is made in the most  
 simple manner, unaccompanied by  
 any of those circumstances which on  
 other occasions struck the senses and  
 the imagination with the profoundest  
 awe.



“ And Moses came, and called for  
“ the elders of the people, and laid  
“ before their faces all these words  
“ which the Lord commanded him ;  
“ and all the people answered toge-  
“ ther and said, *All that the Lord*  
“ *hath spoken, we will do.*”

After the people had thus solemnly  
and deliberately engaged themselves  
to serve the Lord, he whom they had  
thus engaged to serve vouchsafed to  
give such evidence of his power and  
of his presence, as should leave no  
doubts upon their mind. No sooner  
had Moses made to him a declaration  
of the solemn resolution entered into  
by the people, than this gracious mes-  
sage is returned : “ Lo, I come to  
“ thee in a thick cloud, that the  
“ people may hear when I speak with  
“ thee, and believe thee for ever !”  
That there might be no possibility of  
mistake, the day and manner of this  
appearance

appearance is appointed; and in the manner, and on the day foretold, it did accordingly take place. For —

“ It came to pass on the third day,  
“ in the morning, that there were  
“ thunders and lightnings, and a thick  
“ cloud upon the mount, and the  
“ voice of the trumpet exceeding  
“ loud; so that all the people that  
“ was in the camp trembled. And  
“ Moses brought forth all the people  
“ that was in the camp to meet with  
“ God, and they stood at the nether  
“ part of the mount; and Mount  
“ Sinai was altogether on a smoke be-  
“ cause the Lord descended upon it  
“ in fire; and the smoke ascended  
“ upon it as it were the smoke of a  
“ furnace, and the whole mount  
“ quaked greatly. And when the  
“ voice of the trumpet sounded long,  
“ and waxed louder and louder, Moses  
“ spake, and God answered him *by*

D 6 ' “ *a voice.*

*" a voice. And the Lord came  
" down upon Mount Sinai, upon  
" the top of the mount. And the  
" Lord called Moses up to the top of  
" the mount."*

Where shall we find a passage to equal the sublimity of the description? Perhaps the impression which it made upon me when I was very young, may tend to heighten the effect which it has upon my mind; but I never yet have been able to read it without fancying myself a spectator of the solemn scene, and shrinking appalled as if I heard the awful trumpet sounding in my ears.

Well may we expect that the words which the people were thus called upon to hear, and which were ushered in by circumstances so extraordinary, should be worthy of the lord and giver of life to communicate;

nicate ; and that they should tend to promote the well-being and happiness of the people to whom they were addressed. Let us observe —

“ God spake these words, and said, “ I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage — *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*”

This truth, the foundation of all religion, was here established, and it was to the rude people to whom it was addressed, confirmed by a reference to facts which came within the limits of their own experience. He taught them what only by his special interference could be taught, that there is but ONE GOD ; and that he should be the only object of their adoration. In order to preserve this belief in its purity, he warns them against those corruptions which human depravity had

had introduced into the worship of all other nations. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

From the latter part of this declaration of the Divine will, we are led to observe, that what we consider as the natural and inevitable course of things, is, in reality, a part of the scheme of Providence, and is subject to the guidance and control of the Almighty

Almighty Governor of the universe. We know that if a man squanders his fortune, his children must suffer poverty ; — that if he neglects their education, they must be ignorant ; and that if he corrupts their minds, they will be vicious. But this in the natural course of things should go on from generation to generation without end or limits. Here we have the word of God that it shall not be so. And that though by the laws of Providence he permits the iniquities of the fathers to be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation, that visitation shall have its bounds ; while to his mercies there are no bounds ! They are shewn indiscriminately to all who love him and keep his commandments.

He to whom all hearts are open, who knows all the different avenues to temptation, knew how soon the sanctifying

tifying impression made by the awful sense of his being and attributes would be destroyed, if these ideas were not guarded and fenced round by habitual reverence. He was not only to be the sole object of faith and of worship, but his very name was to be kept sacred, and never introduced but when the heart was seriously inclined to do him homage.

“Thou shalt not take the name of  
“the Lord thy God in vain, for the  
“Lord will not hold him guiltless  
“that taketh his name in vain !”

Then follows the law which in its due observance could not fail to seal the principles of faith upon the heart. I have in another place \* observed upon the wisdom of appointing a certain stated period to be, as often as

\* See Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, vol. ii, letter 3.

it returns, appropriated to the special service of God. I have shewn that from the nature of the human mind it is impossible without such assistance to preserve the spirit of devotion in the soul. You cannot as yet be supposed capable of entering into the force of all the arguments there employed; but you may so far comprehend the scope and meaning of them as to be sensible that, as our attention is necessarily engaged by our present occupations, they will, whether they be those of business or of pleasure, lead our thoughts from God. To keep alive upon our hearts a sense of his divine presence, we must therefore be often obliged forcibly to recall our minds from other objects. But, alas! without Divine assistance, how seldom would this have been accomplished! God therefore from the beginning of the world appointed



appointed the seventh day as a day of remembrance, a day to be separated and set apart from the common purposes of life, and appropriated to the particular consideration of the duties we owe to Him who is the maker and governor of all things. No law which tended to the moral improvement of man was ever abrogated by him who appointed it. We accordingly find, that this law, which was given to Adam in a state of innocence, was again solemnly repeated by the voice which issued from the thick cloud that covered Sinai.

“ Remember the Sabbath-day to  
 “ keep it holy. Six days shalt thou  
 “ labour and do all thy work ; but  
 “ the seventh day is the sabbath of the  
 “ Lord thy God : *in it thou shalt not*  
 “ *do any work*, thou, nor thy son, nor  
 “ thy daughter, nor thy man-servant,  
 “ nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cat-  
 “ tle,

“tle, nor the stranger which is within  
“thy gates. For in six days the  
“Lord made heaven and earth, the  
“sea and all that in them is, and  
“rested the seventh day: wherefore  
“the Lord blessed the seventh day,  
“and hallowed it.”

Consider with attention the scope and meaning of this Divine command. How perfect in wisdom, how infinite in benevolence, was he who framed it! The benefit of a sacred interval of repose from worldly pursuits was not to be confined to any class or description of persons. It was to extend to all.

“Hail, Sabbath! thee I hail the poor man’s  
“day!”

So, without poetical exaggeration, may it emphatically be pronounced. Even the very animals whom God  
has

has appointed to lend their strength to the feebler race of man, have in this ordinance a charter of rights, which to all generations establishes their claims to a certain portion of rest and comfort.

The other six commandments relate to the social duties, and are founded in the immutable principles of truth and justice. By them men are taught to restrain the selfish passions, and to respect the feelings and rights of their fellow-creatures. Upon all of them, many able commentaries have been written, and many excellent sermons have been preached. These, I make no doubt, will in due time be perused by you with proper attention; but it is not my object, at present, to enter into any discussion upon the subject of particular duties. I only now aim at giving you a general view of the support afforded  
to

to moral principle by the light of revelation, from the period of its commencement at the creation of the world, to that of its meridian splendour in the coming of the Messiah.

May my feeble endeavours be blessed to your use by the God of mercy, and to his name be the glory!

LETTER IV.

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*My dear Lady Elizabeth,*

ALTHOUGH the ten commandments retain their place in the church service, and though a portion of the Old Testament is still read by appointment every day, I believe there are many who think that a knowledge of Old Testament history is entirely superfluous, and that it has in reality nothing to do with Christianity. I said *many* who *think* so; but I correct myself; for the people who take  
up

up such silly notions, are they who never think at all.

Let us suppose, my little friend, Lord B. as destined at a future period to fill some great employment in the state, for which a knowledge of the laws and constitution of his country would be essentially requisite. Would this acquirement be left to chance? Or would it be thought possible that he could attain the information necessary to qualify him for the place in question, without some trouble and research? No. Where temporal interests are at stake, no such follies are committed. He would be directed by his friends and preceptors to make himself acquainted with the history of his country from the earliest period, and taught to observe the gradual formation of its happy constitution, through ages of Gothic darkness and semi-barbarism,

to

to its full establishment in more enlightened times. So true it is, that  
“ the children of this world are wiser  
“ in their generation than the chil-  
“ dren of light !”

We, who believe that God has called us to prepare ourselves for a higher and nobler scene, ought surely to take no less pains to obtain all possible information upon what so nearly concerns our future welfare, than we see to be taken by those who desire to qualify themselves for situations that are temporal and transient. — There can be no comparison in the interest which they are each calculated to excite. If a generous glow warms the bosom of the youthful patriot, when, as he reads the history of his country, he marks the infant form of Liberty, nursed in the bosom of reason, and gradually attaining strength and vigour to defend the  
rights

rights of his protectress, can we with insensibility, behold the progress of that light, whose beams brought freedom to an enslaved world? that light which taught us to claim, and enabled us to secure, our title to an everlasting kingdom, where no tyrant shall have dominion over us; for death and sin shall be no more!

We have seen the Almighty, he who is from eternity to eternity the same, he who is now present to you and to me; who knows our secret thoughts ere they be formed in our hearts; and witnesses all our actions; we have seen him displaying the majesty of power, and issuing from Sinai the laws which were to govern his chosen people.

Let us now proceed to take a farther view of this extraordinary interference of the Creator for the accom-



plishment of the designs of his infinite wisdom.

The ten commandments contain such instructions in the nature of the Deity, and such views of his attributes, and of the worship and reverence due to him, as never were known to any other nation. They contain such prohibitory statutes as reason allows to be the foundation of social union, and which experience has in all nations found essential to the well-being of society. Reason, the light of the soul, is from God: and by God are its decrees here confirmed, while, at the same time, additional light concerning the nature of the Giver is bestowed; not such light as opposes itself to that of reason, but clearer and brighter, more definite and distinct, than unassisted reason could attain.

I wish you to pay particular attention

tion to this; that if ever you are so unfortunate as to fall into the society of those who impiously scoff at Divine revelation, you may at once perceive, that it is not in reason but in folly that their rejection of its truths originates.

I wish you to attend to it upon another account; that when you become acquainted with the history, and conversant in the opinions, and religion, and philosophy, of the most celebrated nations of antiquity, you may be prepared not only to appreciate their merits, but to observe their deficiencies.

You will observe, that wherever the superior light of revelation did not illuminate the mind, idolatry, the most absurd of all human inventions, universally prevailed; and that the wise and the foolish, the learned and the ignorant, fell down with equal

reverence before the gods of their own making. To us this now appears so surprising, that we can hardly believe it possible that people endowed with a common share of understanding could ever have been guilty of such extreme folly. The fact is, however, too fully proved to allow a shade of doubt to rest upon it. The only palliating circumstance that is by way of apology offered, is the assertion that a few—a *very few* philosophers saw the absurdity of the idolatrous worship which was every where established, but did not think it would be proper to let the vulgar know that there was but one God, and that he was the only true object of reverence and worship.

It is then confessed, that all the reason of these men, whom we acknowledge to have carried unassisted reason to its highest perfection, did  
not

not teach them, that just conceptions of the Deity are in any degree essential to morals. Yet this now appears to more enlightened reason as an incontrovertible truth : a truth first published from Sinai, and which, from the day of its publication, has stood at the head of the tables of the law. Ought we not to be filled with gratitude towards Him, who, in pity to our weakness, gave such additional instructions concerning his own nature, and gave them in such a way as to render it impossible that the impression could ever be entirely obliterated? We are told, “ that all  
 “ the people saw and heard the thunders and the lightnings, and the  
 “ noise of the trumpet, and the mountains smoking ; and that when the  
 “ people saw it, they removed, and  
 “ stood afar off. And they said unto  
 “ Moses, Speak thou with us, and

“ we will hear ; but let not God  
“ speak unto us, lest we die. And  
“ Moses said unto the people, Fear  
“ not ; for God is come to prove you,  
“ and that his fear may be before your  
“ faces, that ye sin not. Then Moses  
“ drew near unto the thick darkness  
“ where God was. And the Lord  
“ said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou  
“ say unto the children of Israel : Ye  
“ have seen that I have talked with  
“ you from heaven. Ye shall not  
“ make with me gods of silver, neither  
“ shall ye make to yourselves gods of  
“ gold.”

The remainder of the laws which  
were instituted at this memorable epoch  
were delivered through the agency of  
Moses. They are of two distinct  
species. The first relates to the ad-  
ministration of justice ; and contains  
rules and precepts, some of which,  
like the commandments, are of uni-  
versal

versal application ; others adapted to the peculiar situation of the Jewish nation, and calculated for a people in that particular stage of civilization at which they were then arrived. The laws of the other class are avowedly instituted for a special purpose, and *for a limited period*. They form, as it were, a wall of separation betwixt the Israelites and the other nations of the earth. They chiefly consist of rites, and ceremonies, and observances, which were all doubtless of high importance, and of real though mysterious signification, but which we can now but very imperfectly comprehend. Nor is it necessary for us to seek for more than a general view of the intention of Providence in these ordinances ; and that is so [obvious as not to require either study or research.

By laws and usages so peculiar, they

were distinguished and separated from other nations. By all the ceremonies and rites of worship, they were reminded of the awful sanctity of Him who is the sole object of all religious praise and veneration. By some of these ceremonies they were reminded of what he had done, in times past, for them and for their ancestors, and of the deliverance he had wrought for them according to his word: by others they were taught to look forward in hope to the completion of the promise of a future blessing, which was to be the seal of the covenant; to which all the sacrifices of the law referred, and in which all its ceremonies were to terminate.

Concerning the precise nature of this blessing, they were not yet in a condition to be fully instructed. It was sufficient for them to be told by the  
the

the heaven-inspired lawgiver, that this institution of rites and ceremonies was only intended as an introduction to a purer and more perfect system, in which they were to be instructed by a divine personage sent from God. That if they in the mean time performed the engagements they had come under to God, and strictly observed all the forms and ceremonies of the law, and acted up to all its moral precepts, the Divine favour would be manifested to them in a special and extraordinary manner; and that they should be blessed, *nationally* and *individually*, with an uncommon share of temporal felicity.

The promise made to Abraham of the district then known by the name of Canaan, and which was afterwards called Judea, was not only ratified, but a near period fixed for its accomplishment. To these specific pro-



mises, threatenings no less clear and specific were added. They were not only warned in general, that punishment would, in consequence of disobedience, be inflicted, but they were particularly instructed in the nature of the punishments ordained.

The history of the Jews, from this period until the coming of the Messiah, informs us how punctually, how literally, these promises and threatenings were fulfilled. Notwithstanding the demonstrations which God had given of his power and wisdom, his justice, mercy, and truth; notwithstanding the powerful impression these demonstrations made upon the senses, was such as to give to this rude and otherwise unenlightened people more sublime conceptions of the power and majesty of the Supreme Being than any other nation ever possessed; notwithstanding all this,

this, they yielded to temptation. They, to whom God had revealed himself as a God of righteousness, turned aside from him and from his worship, and bent their knees in reverence to the idols of other nations. They made themselves images from the metals which they had dug from the bowels of the earth, and fell down before them, and worshipped them! You will doubtless think this a very strange infatuation. But, my dear Lady Elizabeth, let us not follow the example of Miss Gloss. Let us remember, that in the world idolatry was then the fashion; that they who thus forgot God, could plead the example of the great, and the mighty, and the powerful of the earth! Let us remember, too, that knowledge does not operate as a preserver of the heart, until it has been converted into an active principle. "Hear ye

“ this !” saith the Prophet, “ ye  
 “ which are called by the name of  
 “ Jacob, which swear by the name of  
 “ the Lord, and make mention of the  
 “ God of Israel, *but not in truth nor*  
 “ *in righteousness !*”

Let us, however, do justice to the descendants of Abraham. Though the multitude did indeed become corrupt, there were, even in the most degenerate times, a chosen few who worshipped the God of their fathers in sincerity, and, in spite of every obstacle, continued to have respect to all his commandments. Such persons inquired, as we are now inquiring, into the nature and purpose of all that God had revealed to man, from the creation of the world to their own times. They perceived that “ the  
 “ law of the Lord was perfect, rejoicing the heart ;” that “ the law  
 “ of the Lord was pure, enlightening  
 “ the

“ the simple ;” and that “ in keeping  
“ his statutes there was great reward.”  
They perceived that the punishments  
denounced against disobedience, and  
the blessings promised upon obedi-  
ence, had in all times past never  
failed of being fulfilled : and wisely  
concluded, that he who is the same  
yesterday, to-day, and for ever, would,  
as he had done in times past, continue  
to do in times to come. They laid  
these things to heart. “ They covered  
“ themselves with integrity as with a  
“ garment,” and “ washed their hands  
“ in innocence ;” and in this left us  
an example, that we should follow  
their steps.

Adieu !

LETTER V.

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**A** GAIN, my dearest Lady Elizabeth,  
again I must request you to accompany me into the regions of antiquity, to trace, if I may so express myself, the footsteps of Providence throughout all generations. Were it a subject in which we had no personal interest, it is surely in itself so extraordinary as to awaken curiosity and command attention. But when we consider that the consequences of every special act of grace and mercy extend

extend to all, and that none are excluded from the benefit of them but such as willingly exclude themselves, we must be very torpid indeed if we rest satisfied with vague and imperfect information concerning their nature and extent.

It is remarked by a very learned and a very wise man, " that the general design of Scripture is to give us an account of the world, in this one single view, *as God's world* : and that by this, Scripture is essentially distinguished from all other books \*." In reading the Scripture history, we shall find much advantage from attending to this remark ; as it confines our observations and our criticisms to the general tenor of the record, and cuts off all occasion of contention concerning points

\* See Butler's Analogy, p. 377.

that

that are of little consequence to the main design.

In other histories we expect to be presented with a view of the remarkable events that have been brought about by means of human agency; and in order to give us any dependence on the veracity of the historian, it is necessary that the events described be natural; that is to say, conformable to general experience, and such as can be accounted for on general principles. From the view given of the general design of Scripture, we are taught to expect to find something beyond the limits of usual experience; and therefore the credibility of the Scripture historians must rest on other grounds. The books of the Old Testament were written by persons of very different stations and situations, and in different ages, and yet they as perfectly unite

unite in carrying on the main design of Scripture history, as if they had written in conformity to a preconcerted plan.

Instead of presenting us with a course of events evolving the *general* laws of Providence, the Bible gives us an historical view of those particular instances, in which God in his infinite wisdom saw fit to deviate from these general laws, by what to our shallow apprehension appears to be more special acts of power. And though we should find (or imagine we find) reason to believe that the human agents appointed by God to and down to latest ages the history of his providence, had in other respects been liable to all the errors and prejudices of their contemporaries, and that therefore the Bible history partakes, as far as relates to facts merely historical, of the imperfection which



which attaches to all other histories, we should not be in the least disturbed, since these imperfections do not impugn the integrity of the writers, nor in anywise defeat the purpose for which we believe their writings to have been intended.

The history of the Jews, from their taking possession of the promised land to the reign of David, though it is only, in other respects, such a mere outline of events as might be expected from the rude historians of a rude age, is nevertheless, with regard to the fulfilment of all that was foretold by Moses and by Joshua, so explicit, as to leave no doubt upon the reader's mind.

By the prophet Samuel, God renewed the offers of mercy, and reminded his people of the punishments that followed disobedience; but until David was established on the throne,  
to

to which he was appointed while a shepherd-boy, we find no renewal of the promise which referred to the future and universal blessing.

Of this universal blessing, David was inspired to speak in still plainer terms than had been employed by Moses; but we are not to imagine that either David or Moses had any accurate conception concerning the nature of the event which they foretold. The Divine Being in revealing himself to David did not make the same display of his power or his glory as he had done to Moses. This was now unnecessary, and God does nothing in vain. David had from his infancy been instructed in the law. He heard from his fathers "what had been done in their days, and in the old times before them," and from their experience and his own, knew to a certainty that all the promises and threaten-

threatenings of God had been fulfilled. The sceptre promised to the tribe of Judah had been put into his hand; and the same God who made the promise to Jacob, and who, to mark its accomplishment, had called him who was of that tribe, from the humble privacy of a shepherd's life to be king over Israel, promised that from him the future king should spring, to whom all the kings of the earth were to do homage.

It was not necessary that David should know the exact nature of his own predictions; but it was necessary that he should have such an assurance of their accomplishment as might descend to his posterity. It was necessary that the people should have proof, amounting to a demonstration, that the prophecies which he delivered concerning the Messiah's reign came from God. This assurance

ance was given by God in the usual method. The circumstances of Solomon's peaceful and splendid reign were foretold while he was yet a child, and no circumstance foretold concerning it failed to be accomplished.

Again, " God spake by the prophets." Some of these prophets were, as we incidentally learn, persons of distinguished birth, high in situation, and of eminent abilities : others were, in the language of the world, *of low origin*, and consequently held in little estimation by the multitude, for the virtues which distinguished them in the sight of God. They each speak the language of the situation in which they were born. They express themselves in terms more or less refined according to their education ; and in the choice of the metaphors and allusions which they employ

employ as illustrations of their subject, they display a very different share of taste and talent. But like various instruments tuned in unison, they vibrate in perfect harmony. The simple and the dignified, the rude and the refined, are employed by God, with equal effect, as messengers of his will.

It may be, as yet, too soon for you to enter upon the perusal of the books of the prophets ; but select passages from each of them might be pointed out to you, in which you could not fail to observe an elevation of sentiment, and a sublimity of thought and expression, such as you have never met with in any other book.

But however the grandeur of these lofty strains may excite our admiration, it is a general view and a clear conception of their tendency, that can alone be useful in establishing  
and

and augmenting our faith. What then was the general tendency of all that was spoken by the prophets ?

The question is easily answered.

They confirm and establish a belief in, all the Divine attributes, and communicate an increase of knowledge with regard to the Divine nature and government. They all tend to excite the hope of a future blessing, and were evidently intended to keep alive the expectation of an event more interesting than any that had taken place since the creation of the world ; and, as the time approached, to give to man clearer views of the nature of that event, and stronger pledges of its accomplishment.

Unity of design we might expect to find in all that comes from Him who is from everlasting to everlasting unchangeably the same. But never  
in

in all the works of Providence do we behold it so conspicuously displayed as in these transactions between God and man, which I have now attempted to trace.

We have seen the Creator lighting in the human breast the lamp of reason, and kindling the social and benevolent affections in his heart. Whatever these had been able to discover of moral truth, we have seen Him authenticating under the seal of revelation; and thus, as it were, impressing on these truths for a second time the signet of Omnipotence. We have seen the disorder introduced by sin, and we have witnessed the promise given, that by an event, darkly and figuratively expressed, the disorder should be remedied. Upon this promise, an additional light was by every succeeding revelation thrown. To Abraham it w

given in more explicit terms than to our first parents, and to him it was confirmed by certain pledges which served to establish his faith, and to give a security to his posterity for the accomplishment of the prophecies that had been foretold.

In all the miraculous display of supreme power which sanctioned the authority of Moses, we only behold the gradual advancement of that design which had been already intimated. It was as a means of ministering to its accomplishment that the law was established; and this alone gave efficacy, sense, and meaning to each of its ordinances. By Moses the coming of the Messiah was again declared, and further light than had hitherto been granted, was thrown upon the nature of his divine mission.

As a prophet superior in wisdom to



him, who was the first of the prophets, he was described by Moses: as a king, far surpassing himself in power and greatness, he was described by David: as uniting both these characters, and yet in his station and appearance seeming to give a contradiction to all the expectations that had been formed concerning him, he was described by all the subsequent prophets, some of whom relate the circumstances of his birth and sufferings, and death, as if they had been eye-witnesses of the scenes which they so minutely pourtray.

To afford incontestable proof of their divine mission, they forewarned their contemporaries of events which would soon take place, not only in their own nation but in others. They spoke loudly, and plainly, and decidedly of the punishments which God intended to inflict upon them  
for

for their sins, and gave clear and minute descriptions of the nature of these punishments.

Every thing that they declared took place: every word spoken by the prophets was fulfilled. When the period arrived in which the Jews were to suffer the afflictions due to their impenitence, they did suffer; and, when humbled by adversity, perceived that the prophets whom they had despised, had, by Divine inspiration, anticipated the records of history.

The afflictions which they endured in their long captivity, had, in some respects, their proper effect. They produced a more entire hearty dependence upon God, and a more uniform performance of their religious duties. In their prosperity they had forgotten the promise of hope, but they clung to it in their adversity;

and though their views of its nature were extremely erroneous, their faith was from henceforth steady and sincere.

The voice of prophecy now ceased. The Israelites, to whom the law had been given as a perpetual memorial of God's power and goodness, were now convinced of its Divine authority; they had a full experience concerning the exact fulfilment of the promises and threatenings by which it had been sanctioned; and built upon that experience a certain confidence concerning what yet remained to be accomplished, and waited in awful expectation of the desired event.

In contemplating these Divine interpositions we cannot but be filled with awful ideas of the immutability of the Supreme Being. The scheme of *Providence* is far too extensive for  
our

our grasp. All beyond what he has been pleased explicitly to declare, is involved in darkness; but of what he has explicitly declared we are bound to make the proper use. In all that we have seen displayed of it in the many revolving ages that have passed under our review, we perceive the most perfect harmony; we perceive the indications of never-failing truth. Where do we find that God promised and did not fulfil his promise? Where do we find that he threatened and did not punish? For a certain length of time, such a time as was sufficient to give an ample room for the operation of experience, these promises and threatenings were confined to objects of sense. They were seen, felt, and understood by the learned and unlearned; and as they were, in many instances, not individual, but national, the accomplishment of them

was too conspicuous to admit of doubt or controversy.

Could they who had thus experienced the immutable veracity of the Divine Instructor, imagine that though he fulfilled his promises with regard to what was near, he would not fulfil them with regard to what was far off? No. They could not thus think! And is the nature of the Eternal changed? If the promises and threatenings given through Moses and the prophets were fully and completely accomplished, can we believe that those given by a greater than Moses shall fail? The nature of the dispensation is, indeed, in some respects changed, *but he who gave it can never change!*

The punishments and rewards declared by Moses, were national and temporal. The punishments and rewards declared by Jesus are individual and eternal. And as surely as the children

dren of Israel obtained possession of the land promised to their fathers, so surely shall we obtain possession of that inheritance promised by God through Jesus Christ, if we, on our parts, perform the conditions of the engagement. As surely as the children of Judah were led into captivity by the King of Babylon, according to all that had been foretold them by the prophet, so surely shall you and I be condemned at the day of judgment, if we, like them, refuse to listen to the prophet's voice.

In the words of the prophet to whom I have so lately alluded, I may now make an appropriate conclusion of this letter. "Have ye not known?" says Isaiah the son of Amos, "Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the

“ foundations of the earth ? It is He  
“ that sitteth upon the circle of the  
“ earth, and the inhabitants thereof  
“ are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth  
“ out the heavens as a curtain, and  
“ spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell  
“ in : that bringeth the princes to no-  
“ thing : he maketh the judges of the  
“ earth as vanity. He shall blow upon  
“ them and they shall wither, and the  
“ whirlwind shall take them away as  
“ stubble. The grass withereth, the  
“ flower fadeth, because the spirit of  
“ the Lord bloweth upon it ; surely  
“ the people is as grass. The grass  
“ withereth ; the flower fadeth. BUT  
“ THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL  
“ STAND FOR EVER ! ”

LETTER VI.

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**I**N ushering in the law of ordinances, it pleased the Almighty Giver of the law to afford such testimonies of its Divine origin as were evident to the senses ; but in ushering in the law of grace, the appeal was no longer to be made to the senses, but to the understanding and the heart. Every circumstance was declarative of the difference of the dispensation. The glories of this world, which had by Moses and the prophets been held forth as the reward of obedience, were cast into shade by “the glory which



"excelleth," the glory of immortality !  
Hope was no longer to cling to earthly  
things ; the désires of the heart were to  
be purified and exalted ; and all tem-  
poral objects to give place to those  
which are eternal.

The circumstances of our Saviour's  
birth gave a mortal blow to worldly  
pride. When we contrast them with  
the scene of grandeur and magni-  
ficence exhibited at the giving of the  
law, we cannot wonder that the Jews  
should doubt and be astonished. They  
who were filled with high expectations  
of seeing the reign of the Messiah com-  
mence by an external display of might  
and power, could not by less than  
miracle be brought to acknowledge, as  
their promised Saviour, one like him,  
born and nurtured in poverty and  
obscurity.

For this they might indeed have  
been prepared by the prophets, as b  
som

some of them his lowly situation in society had been minutely foretold. But the respect which is in this world given to power, and riches, and grandeur, blinded their eyes, and misled their hearts. This had likewise been foretold many ages before ; being mentioned by Isaiah as an inevitable consequence of their mistaken views.

“ My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 “ neither are my ways your ways, saith  
 “ the Lord : for as the heavens are  
 “ above the earth, so are my ways  
 “ higher than your ways, and my  
 “ thoughts than your thoughts.”

The Jews read this, and they believed it ; but still, having their minds filled with images of vulgar glory, they forgot that it alluded to the description that had just been given of the Messiah, as “ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” and persisted in expecting that the

promises made to their fathers should be fulfilled by the appearance of a great and powerful prince.

We ought to reap instruction from their mistake; and as we must be convinced of the cause of their delusion, should be upon our guard, lest it assaults us in another form. I shall have occasion to speak more of this hereafter. At present I wish to call your attention to those circumstances which peculiarly distinguish the revelation given by Jesus Christ from that given by the "messengers sent before to prepare his way."

In my last letters I have endeavoured to shew you, that the light which God dispensed through these inspired persons, was progressive; diffusing into the hearts of those who received it clearer views of the Divine nature, than man by the use of reason could have obtained. That every  
suc-

successive revelation gave an additional motive to the practice of virtue, by giving additional assurance that virtue was pleasing in the sight of God ; and that a departure from the laws of truth, and justice, and piety, and mercy, would bring down the wrath of Deity upon the offender.

By these lights the prophets prepared the way for Him, who was to be the way, the truth, and the light ; and who was to unfold the Divine nature and the scheme of Providence with an effulgence and an efficacy beyond their commission or their power to impart. To Him give all the prophets witness ; testifying that in Him should the law, and all its types and symbolical institutions, be fulfilled ; exemplifying in his pure and holy life the perfection of righteousness, and thus fulfilling the moral law ; and offering in his death a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world,

world, and thus accomplishing all that the ordinances of the law had by its various rites prefigured.

Believing that you are not as yet prepared for comprehending the solemn truths, involved in the important but mysterious doctrines of redemption, I shall refrain from entering upon them further than is necessary towards laying a proper, and consequently a deep, foundation for the formation of religious principle in your heart. To this end I am anxious to direct your attention to what was spoken by the prophets concerning the Messiah; of whom, in obedience to the spirit of God, though in direct opposition to their own prejudices, they spake as bringing salvation not to the Jews alone, but to all the nations of the earth.

All that God had, by the voice of his inspired prophets, promised, was, by the coming of the Son of God, accomplished.

plished. By him the counsels of God were published. By him the scheme of Providence was so far displayed as was necessary towards effecting the purposes of the dispensation of grace ; the additional knowledge afforded being of such a nature as could never without Divine revelation have been obtained, and such as had, in every instance, a tendency to increase and strengthen the principles of moral virtue. By Moses and the prophets God had been declared to be a God of holiness. By them he was represented as hating sin, and punishing all manner of iniquity. But in how much brighter colours was this displayed by Jesus Christ in what he saw fit to unfold of the scheme of redemption !

By Moses, God had promised to the Israelites to grant them especial assistance, on certain conditions of obedience ; and while they performed their

part of the covenant, God did not fail of performing his. This assistance was offered and bestowed towards procuring for them national blessings, advantages that were *temporal* and *external*, and the duties enjoined them to perform in order to obtain it, were in many instances also external.

Let us now examine whether we have any offers analogous to this made to us by the Son of God; and how far the analogy extends. Let us see what is the nature of the promises and threatenings he came in the name of his Father to publish; and what the nature of the duties we have to perform in order to entitle us to the reward; and whether, in the performance of them, we have reason to expect the Divine assistance, and upon what conditions.

To the least enlightened understanding it must plainly appear, from  
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the whole tenor of the Gospel, that  
 the Lord came not, like Moses, to  
 institute a law that was to have a  
 temporary authority, but a law that  
 was to endure for ever. He came  
 not to offer to those who accepted  
 the promise of any particular ad-  
 vantages in this world, nor did he  
 threaten those who refused with any  
 temporal punishment ; but he came  
 commissioned by God to give the as-  
 surance of *eternal happiness* to those  
 who accepted the offered terms of  
 salvation, and of *eternal misery* to  
 those who refused ! He came to  
 make this glorious offer of never-  
 ending felicity, and this awful de-  
 nunciation of never-ending woe, not  
 merely to the persons of his own  
 country, and his own times, not to  
 any particular nation, or to those who  
 could be known or classed by any  
 external badge, but *individually* to  
 all



*all* who then heard, *all* who should hereafter hear, the words of the gospel of peace ! To you and to me, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, were these promises and threatenings addressed. We may accept, or we may reject them. But unless we can control and alter the counsels of the Most High, we cannot avoid the consequences of our choice.

This is a very awful consideration. It behoves us to attend to it. It behoves us the more seriously, because we are told by Him to whom all the prophets bare witness, and whose prophecies are sure of being fulfilled, that though many should hear, of the many there should be few who would not hear in vain !

I am extremely anxious to impress a lively notion of your personal interest in all our Saviour said and did ; because I am convinced that it is not until such impression be made upon  
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the heart, that the account will prove of any use. Let me then entreat you to reflect, that what a day is to eternity, so is all that this world can offer in comparison of what is offered to us by God through Jesus Christ. Then let us for a while throw the world and the things of the world from our minds, and come and inquire together concerning the foundation of the hopes we cherish of living in a state of improved felicity and joy, when the world in which we now live shall, by the breath of Him who called it into existence, have been dissolved !

We are expressly told by our Saviour, that " God so loved the world,  
 " that he gave his only begotten Son,  
 " that whosoever believeth in Him  
 " should not perish, but have ever-  
 " lasting life ; for God sent not his  
 " Son into the world to condemn the  
 " world,

“ world, but that the world through  
“ Him might be saved.”

The question now is, in what does this belief, so essential to salvation, consist? Is it enough for us to believe that such a person as Jesus Christ came into the world, and that he did, and taught, and suffered, all that is set forth in the Gospels? I imagine it may be very possible so far to believe all this, as never to entertain any doubt concerning it, and yet that the belief should have no effect upon our heart or conduct. And surely it is no such belief as this that is meant by Him, who elsewhere says, “ It is in vain that ye call me Lord, Lord, “ and do not the things that I say.”

Is it, then, to believe in him according to the interpretation given of his person and doctrines by any particular man or set of men?

No: for this is to believe in these  
inter-

interpreters; not to believe in Jesus Christ. All that is given, as discovered by the exertion of the rational faculties of any uninspired being, is open and liable to the investigation of beings equally gifted. We ought undoubtedly to yield great deference to the opinions of those who are our superiors in abilities, and who have enjoyed greater opportunities of information; but it is not by taking up such opinions implicitly that we are to be saved. Still less reason have we to hope, from enlisting ourselves under the banners of a party; for though we may obtain from the power and influence of that party considerable support in this world, its power and influence will be of no use to us in the next. Our Saviour, who upon all occasions evinced his perfect knowledge of the human heart, foresaw and warned us against this snare.

“ I am

“ I am come in my Father’s name,” said he, “ and ye believe me not : if “ another shall come in his own “ name, him ye will receive. *How* “ *can ye believe* which receive honour “ one of another, and seek not the “ honour that cometh from God ?”

The Israelites who had heard with fear and trembling the voice of God, when he declared himself from Sinai, and who had seen the wonders that he did, could not doubt the evidence of their senses. They did not doubt. And yet we are told that they were kept back from the promised land on account of their unbelief. Now this unbelief of theirs could not have been in the understanding, but in the *spirit* of their hearts. By the same sort of unbelief we shall be equally disqualified. Belief in the Son of God, and in all that he has revealed, must be cherished in the heart as an active principle,

principle, before it can avail us as a hope of salvation. It will be here, as in the common affairs of life : when we seriously believe, we should act accordingly. Let us see if we can illustrate this by an example.

You know the properties of the magnet, and have seen the use made of it in the mariner's compass. Convinced by experience of the invariable fidelity of his extraordinary guide, the European sailor launches out into the expanse of ocean, and trusting, without doubt or hesitation, to the direction of his metallic conductor, ventures to explore seas and regions which were never before explored by any of the human race. Here you see faith a principle of action.

Let us now suppose that an English ship touches at one of the lately discovered islands in the Southern Ocean, and that the captain having,  
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to gratify the curiosity of the natives, explained the nature of the mariner's compass, makes them a present of it at his departure.

The natives, quite proud of their acquisition, boast of it to all their neighbours, as a charm, which will, whenever they please, waft them to the land of the strangers. But, while they thus boast, they never attempt to use the precious gift. Their belief in its fidelity is not sufficiently strong to conquer their apprehensions. They dread as much as ever the consequence of losing sight of land. The compass is therefore to them of no use: it is a mere nominal benefit, tending only to increase their pride and self-importance. It is, in short, to them just what Christian faith is to numbers who call themselves Christians—it makes no sort of alteration in their conduct.

Nothing

Nothing can be more clear, than ~~that~~ our belief, the faith by which we are to be saved, is not a passive but an active principle. It includes the exercise of all the best affections of the heart, and all the powers of the understanding. Our love to God, the necessary consequence of our faith, is not only to be sincere, but energetic. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *mind*, and with all thy *strength*." The love of our fellow-creatures (the benevolent principle) is to be exerted with similar activity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These two commandments, which comprise the sum of all moral and religious duties, are of universal authority, and afford to every individual a never-failing test, whereby to judge of his opinions, his habits, and his conduct. They are at the same time of such uni-



versal application, that th  
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nature of the additional light thrown upon the Divine government by the revelation of Jesus Christ, the more completely shall we be convinced of our superior obligations. It is not in such a rapid sketch as the present that these can be properly unfolded, nor is my feeble hand equal to the momentous task. May the bare mention of a few particulars be sufficient to awaken reflection, and to convey some idea of the magnitude of our debt of gratitude to the God of our salvation!

It has, in the first place, given us such an assurance of the evil nature of sin, and of the punishment to which it necessarily leads, and the unwillingness of God to punish, as affords clearer views of the infinite justice and infinite mercy of the Supreme Being, than were ever before displayed to the human race. Another, and to us a most important truth, has been by

the coming of Jesus Christ in the assurance it has given efficacy of repentance.

While external ordinances given as the test of obedience was required to But the test of obedience changed, no longer consisting in mere observance of outward rites, but in the inward pursuing righteousness of the goodness of God, in compassion for our infirmities, has thrown open of mercy to the penitent. This is a source of grace known before. How much comforted by the assurance being given by Him in whom we believe as the mediator between God and man! by Him "who ever we make intercession for us," has solemnly declared that He will be with us to the end of the world.

All that has been revealed of the Holy Spirit in his office of sanctifier, is likewise for our highest gratitude. Can we look up with hope to this Divine assistance, and be insensible to the goodness of our God? Can we beseech him to purify our hearts by the blessed influence of his Holy Ghost, without experiencing the emotions as must infallibly lead to an exercise of all the best affections of the soul? These, had nothing more than these been revealed to us by the coming of the Messiah, would have afforded sufficient argument for gratitude, and love, and reverence, towards our Saviour and our God. But still the future world would have been wrapt in darkness. The promises given to the children of Israel would have been accomplished, if accomplished in the annihilation of hope.

It was not thus that the Almighty had ordained. By Jesus Christ new and more gracious promises were made and ratified. By his mysterious sufferings and voluntary death, we are assured that we shall be saved from the power of death ; that is to say, that death shall not destroy our souls. By his resurrection and ascension, we have a farther assurance of the faithfulness with which God will perform the promise of eternal life to all who on their part faithfully fulfil the conditions of the engagement.

It would surely be superfluous to point out what strong additional motives we have for devoting our heart, and mind, and strength, in love to "him who thus loved us." If we truly believe, we cannot fail to fulfil this great commandment. And if the love of God dwells in  
our

our hearts, it will be impossible for us to give admittance to the feelings of malevolence towards any of his creatures.

Our passions often appear contradictory, because we are at different times under the influence of different inclinations, and impelled by different desires. But every good, and amiable, and generous affection that we cherish, tends to incline our hearts to exercise affections that are akin to it; while every selfish and malevolent passion tends to render us still more selfish and malevolent. This we all know to be true from every day's experience. Suppose you wished to touch the heart of a friend in favour of some very poor distressed object, whom you greatly commiserated; what moment would you think most favourable for your purpose? Would it be when you saw this friend agi-

tated by resentment, and expressing all the fury of rage and disappointment? No: you would be too wise for this. You would never expect that your friend, while under the influence of such passions, would listen to your tale of pity. You would wait for a more favourable moment: and what moment would appear to you more favourable, than that in which you saw his heart glowing with fervent gratitude towards a benefactor, from whom he had just received some signal instance of affection?

Thus you may perceive in what manner the continual exercise of the feelings of reverence, and love, and gratitude towards God, prepares the heart for exercising all the kind and benevolent affections towards man. There is throughout the whole system of revelation, nothing incongruous. One part supports and assists another.

If

If we are commanded to subdue all the malevolent passions, we are at the same time taught how to conquer them; and if we sincerely and conscientiously follow the instructions we have received from Divine wisdom, evil passions may assail, but they will never reign over us.

I may appeal to you in the words of St. Paul: — “Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things?” “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work!”

Adieu!



LETTER VII.

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*My dearest Lady Elizabeth,*

**I** HAVE, in my last letter, represented to you that an increase of love and reverence towards God must ensue as an inevitable consequence of our belief in the doctrines revealed by Jesus Christ. I have likewise shewn you that the perpetual exercise of love and gratitude towards a Being of infinite purity and perfection, must introduce dispositions highly favourable towards our fellow-creatures.

tures. I now proceed to take a more particular view of the additional light thrown upon the foundation of moral principle, and the consequent advantages derived to virtue from the instructions of our Saviour.

The chief advantage derived from the gift of reason is, that it enables man to profit by experience. To a proper application of the knowledge accumulated from this source, we owe all the improvements of society, all the wisdom of philosophy, and all the laws that govern the several states and kingdoms of the world.

Wherever the inestimable gift of reason had been most effectually improved, there virtue was painted in the fairest colours, and vice described as most hateful and injurious. Among the heathens many wise men had from time to time arisen, who gave excellent instructions concern-

ing the advantages resulting from a strict adherence to truth, integrity, and justice; and who, with great force of reasoning, warned men of the consequences of giving themselves up to their selfish and wicked passions.

Now all that these wise men had by the use of the reason given from God discovered of moral truth, was by Jesus Christ strengthened and confirmed. In what he added to their discoveries, he did not oppose, but assist the light of reason, and enabled it to shine farther and brighter than it had ever done before.

The heathen philosophers may be compared to men who laboured to remove a mass of iron ore from a bed of magnet. In vain did they exert their strength against the power of attraction. It proved too potent for their feeble efforts to overcome.

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It required knowledge which they had not to perceive the cause, and skill beyond what they possessed, to remove it.

Happiness — the object of all hearts, or, to carry on the metaphor, the universal magnet — was, by the doctrines of our Saviour, elevated to its true and proper situation. “ Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The assurance which he brought of that happiness to which he thus directed us, shook to the foundation the strong holds of pride and selfishness, which are bound by bonds stronger than those of iron to the present world. These he, in the language of Scripture, “ broke asunder, like a potter’s vessel.” Through faith in his promises the present world must even so far lose its influence over our hearts as to prevent us from purchasing

chasing any of the gratifications it affords, at the risk of losing the infinitely greater happiness to which we aspire, and which, if we depend on him, we shall without doubt obtain.

Thus you perceive what great advantages the Christian moralist has over the heathen. For though virtue does often promote, nay, does generally promote the happiness of its votaries in this world, it does not *always* do so, but in many instances quite the reverse; and there are by whom this may be read, and whose consciences will bear witness that I speak from my own knowledge of this fact.

A heathen philosopher would tell us, that virtue is its own reward; and that the consciousness of having through pure and generous motives undertaken a generous and noble action,

tion, ought to console us for all the misery with which, through the baseness or ingratitude of others, it may have been repaid. Christianity sets this in a still clearer light. It teaches, that the state of probation in which we are placed, is not only a trial of virtue, but of faith; and that the mortifications which we at any time meet in the performance of our duty, may be converted by God into essential benefits to ourselves and others. The use which it teaches us to make of the disappointments we thus receive, is in its nature very superior to that which the heathen morality above alluded to inculcates. It does not permit us to delude ourselves with vain ideas of our own superior virtue, but to give thanks to God for the grace that he has vouchsafed to bestow upon us; and, while we resign to him the completion of the event,

event, in which we may have been disappointed, zealously to watch over our own hearts, lest there should have sprung, from the opposition we have encountered, any malignant passion, any root of bitterness. By such an anxious inquiry into the motives and consequences of our actions, an effectual check is given to our pride, without abating any thing of our zeal to promote the interests of others. Thus injuries are converted into benefits, and our enemies become our instructors in righteousness. And here you will observe how faith assists us to obey the commandment, and how our obedience tends to augment our faith.

There is no precept in the Gospel so much insisted upon and so frequently repeated as the duty of forgiveness. It is delivered with a strictness and precision which puts it

out of the power of dulness to mistake, or of sophistry to elude. We must forgive, if we hope to be forgiven. And that our own hearts may not deceive us, we must forgive, not in words only, but evince our sincerity by our deeds. We are not only  
 “ to bless those that curse us, but to  
 “ do good to those who hate us, and to  
 “ pray for those who despitefully use  
 “ us and persecute us.”

Our Saviour was not the first who enforced this duty of forgiveness. It was, with certain restrictions and exceptions, recommended by many of the heathen moralists. It is spoken of by Solomon as a proof of wisdom: “The discretion of a wise  
 “ man deferreth his anger; and it is  
 “ his glory to pass over a transgression\*.” “If thine enemy be hun-

\* Prov. xix. 11.

“gry,”



“gry,” says he also, in another place,  
 “give him bread to eat; if he be  
 “thirsty, give him water to drink:  
 “for thus shalt thou heap coals of  
 “fire upon his head, and the Lord  
 “shall reward thee\*.” The same cha-  
 rity is not only recommended by our  
 blessed Lord, but enjoined as a condi-  
 tion of our own salvation; and not  
 only the action but the motive must  
 be pure. Occasions may occur, when,  
 by doing good to those who have  
 injured us, we may in the highest  
 degree gratify our own pride, and in-  
 flict upon our enemy the severest mor-  
 tification. But this is not the spirit  
 of the Gospel. We are to do good,  
*hoping for nothing again*, having no  
 selfish view, no vain-glorious aim, but  
 from motives of pure benevolence.  
 Where the principles of Christianity

\* Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

have

have never touched the heart, this may appear extremely difficult; but let us see whether to those who have truly embraced these principles, it be really so difficult as it at first appears.

If we exercise ourselves to have consciences void of offence towards God and towards man, by whom are we likely to be injured? We may, in the first place, make enemies of those who mistake our characters. But though their false judgment concerning us may lessen our opinion of their penetration, it ought not to detract from our esteem. What proceeds from mistake, we can have no difficulty to forgive, even upon worldly principles. How much less, when we consider the persons by whom we have been thus offended, as beings with whom we have to live in cordial amity throughout the ages of  
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of eternity; as beings beloved of Him, to whom all the heirs of immortality are alike indebted. If our hearts are fixed on the promises of the Gospel, all the importance which pride is apt to give to trifles of momentary duration will be at an end. Who would distress themselves about a mistake, which they were certain would in a few fleeting minutes be cleared up? And are we not certain, that the time approaches when we shall be seen as we really are? "When our Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward us openly; and when that which we have spoken secretly, and in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed" to the congregated universe?

If we have been injured, not through mistake, but wilful malice, the persons capable of such depravity are, beyond all other objects, deserving

serving of our pity. It is our duty to defend ourselves and others against them : but in every such instance the heart of a sincere Christian will breathe the same sentiments as were uttered by Him, who with no less truth than benevolence exclaimed, " Father, forgive them, they know not what they do ! " They indeed *know not what they do*, who give way to the dictates of their passions, and rush blindfold on their own destruction ! And can those who observe and are convinced of this, retain resentment against beings who act under the impulse of such infatuation ? Oh, no ! When we look forward to the consequences of such actions, we think no longer of ourselves, we only consider how it may be possible to save, how it may be practicable to warn, them of their danger.

Let us suppose, that as we are walking

our progress, by removing those obstacles which would have proved too difficult for us to surmount.

The tendency which all the precepts of Christianity are observed to have towards increasing the benevolent affections, has obtained for them some degree of respect, even from those who hold its doctrines in contempt. The proud do not like pride in others; the hard-hearted do not wish to be in their turn treated with cruelty. Those who are false, deceitful, and unjust, feel and acknowledge the benefit which they derive from truth, sincerity, and justice, in those with whom they deal; and thus, though the wicked naturally abhor the righteous, they are often forced to pay an involuntary tribute to their virtues.

Let us, however, observe, that the virtues which meet with the approbation

tion of the worldly-minded, are not always those in which they are themselves most deficient. There is nothing more common than to hear people extolling certain virtues at the expense of others, and putting all their trust and confidence in the performance of one class of duties, to the exclusion of the rest. "These ought ye to have done," said our Lord, "and not to leave the others undone." So much pains did he take to guard us against this fatal snare, that no one can read his discourses with attention, and not be convinced that partial obedience has no right to the promises of the Gospel.

In the formation of religious principle, this is a point of too much importance to be passed slightly over. The analogy between the revelation given by Moses, and that dispensed

by Jesus Christ, may enable us to explain it.

I have before remarked, that as the reward promised by Moses consisted in objects of sense, external ordinances were appointed as the test of obedience. The first thing commanded was to put away all false gods from among them; to destroy all the idols which they had foolishly worshipped; and to serve the Lord their God, and none other God but him.

Now let us suppose, that after receiving this commandment the children of Israel had said one to another,  
“ Well, we must shew some sort of  
“ obedience to this commandment;  
“ we must sacrifice some of our  
“ idols, or we shall lose all chance  
“ of getting to this land of promise.  
“ But we need not surely destroy  
“ them all !”

“ I,” says

“ I,” says one, “ will cheerfully  
“ part with my idols of silver ; but I  
“ shall keep my little idol of gold  
“ in the sanctuary which I have  
“ chosen.” “ And for my share,” says  
another, “ I care not for my golden  
“ images, but I have a certain idol  
“ of silver, which I would not part  
“ with for the world. That I must at  
“ all events retain.”

Can we imagine that such a partial obedience as this would have obtained the promise ? Let us then make the application to ourselves.

By our Saviour a promise is given, which, though in its nature spiritual, is made in terms no less explicit than that published by Moses. In order to obtain it, we are to put away every object, the love of which is incompatible with the supreme love due to God, and inconsistent with that unqualified benevolence which



is due to our fellow-creatures. Instead of the idols of gold and of silver, we are commanded by the Son of God to destroy the power of each selfish, sensual, or vindictive passion, which has obtained an ascendancy in our breasts. We are not only to destroy them, but to cultivate the affections that are most opposite to them ; endeavouring to follow in all things the perfect example of our blessed Lord.

No one can study the Gospel, and say, that we have there any authority for hoping that less than this will in anywise entitle us to the reward. Though, in mercy to our infirmities, our sincere endeavours are, through the merits of Jesus Christ, accepted, in lieu of that perfect obedience of which he was the pattern, we have not the slightest reason to put any confidence in endeavours that  
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are only partial. We must, in all things, aim to "be perfect, even as he is perfect."

Conscious as we are of our own weakness, this seems to us a hard saying, and we are willing to fly to any subterfuge by which we can elude its strictness. Let us, however, not give way to despair. God does not require above what we are able to perform; nor does he leave us without assistance. As he spake by his servant Moses, so he still speaks to those who have turned their faces to go towards the promised land. "Be strong, and of a good courage; fear not, nor be afraid, for the LORD thy God it is he that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

The nature of that assistance which is afforded by the institutions of the

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**Gospel, shall form the subject of my next epistle. My strength and spirits are at present too much exhausted to proceed.**

**Adieu !**

**Feb. 18, 1806.**

LETTER VIII.

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**I** HAVE no doubt that you, my dear and amiable pupil, will find the part of the subject upon which we are now about to enter extremely interesting. It indeed comes home to every heart ; since we may assure ourselves, that the assistance which God has offered will, if accepted, prove effectual in promoting our eternal happiness, and that it cannot be rejected without endangering our own souls.

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The assistance of God's holy spirit is so explicitly declared in every page of the Gospel as one of the blessings purchased for us by our Saviour's death, that it has been established as a leading doctrine of the Christian faith. By persons of warm imagination and weak judgment it has indeed been misrepresented and misunderstood; but the truths of Scripture are not to be brought into question because they have been perverted by the fancies of visionaries and enthusiasts. If we have any faith in the promises made by Jesus Christ, we must believe that this assistance from God will be given to all who piously and sincerely use the appointed means, and for the appointed purposes.

The purposes for which it is appointed, are, in different passages of Scripture, particularly specified. They  
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are these. To increase our faith, to rectify our wills, to elevate our affections, and to purify our hearts. The fruits of the Spirit are declared to be "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are the virtues which were exemplified in Him who "had not the spirit given by measure unto him." They are the virtues which he requires; but not the virtues which without the aid of Divine grace are practicable.

Each and all of those I have enumerated are opposed by the pride of the human heart. They are likewise opposed by selfishness: and to overcome both pride and selfishness, is a task which we cannot of ourselves perform. We must, however, do our part; and the first step towards it, is to be sensible of our own weakness. If we are truly sensible that we stand

In need of Divine aid, we shall be earnest in our endeavours to obtain it: and this we are expressly told is all that is requisite.

But how are we to know that this earnestness is sincere? We are to judge of our sincerity in this, by the same rules that we judge of it upon other occasions. We all know, that when we have truly set our hearts upon obtaining any object which appears desirable to our imaginations, or which we think will materially contribute to our felicity, we spare neither pains nor trouble; that it dwells upon our thoughts, and excites us to active and unwearied exertion. Now if we are as much in earnest to conquer every malignant passion, and to bring all the desires and affections of our heart into subjection to the will of God, we shall seek his assistance with no less anxiety than we

we bestow on the trifling concerns of life.

Whether we have or have not this sincere and hearty desire for Divine aid ought then to be the first, as it is the most important, question we can put to our own hearts. If this desire be kindled in our souls, we shall sedulously employ whatever means God has been pleased to appoint for the accomplishment of our object. Some of these are general, to be applied according to the circumstances in which the individual is placed ; other means of grace are special, and resorted to by all who do not wilfully reject the offers of salvation.

Of those which are general, we must reckon the careful and anxious improvement of every talent entrusted to us ; external or intellectual, adventitious or inherent. Time, for-



tune, influence, the gifts of the understanding, and the dispositions of the heart, are talents for which we are to be responsible; and as it has pleased the goodness of God to grant a promise of blessing upon the proper use of every talent, the conscientious employment of them becomes a means of grace, and enables us to look up with humble confidence for the assistance of our God.

Whatever tends to cherish the amiable and benevolent affections ought to be considered as a means of grace. Every innocent pleasure and enjoyment will, if viewed in this light, be doubly gratifying; as, while it unbends the mind, and gives elasticity to the spirits, it will excite emotions of thankfulness, which always afford a delightful exercise to the heart.

Far from us be the gloomy bigotry  
which

which casts a thick cloud over the sunshine of life, and represents the God of Mercies as a tyrant delighting in human misery. Let us consider him as the parent who wills our happiness and rejoices in our felicity ; and who, to secure us from the fatal mistakes to which our own ignorance would expose us, has kindly warned us against indulging in any pleasure that is not the acknowledged gift of his unbounded love. This is the test of lawful enjoyment : whatever can be enjoyed with innocence, ought to be enjoyed with thankfulness. By keeping this steadily in view, the blessings of life will be converted into means of grace ; and every circumstance in our lot, prosperous and adverse, be rendered equally instrumental in forwarding the work of our salvation.

Prayer, and the sacraments of baptism

tism and the Lord's supper, which are denominated special means of grace, will upon examination be found so admirably adapted to render us the assistance of which we stand so much in need, as to bear evident testimony to the divine wisdom of Him by whom they were appointed. Prayer, as a natural acknowledgment of human weakness, was practised by people of all religions ; but it was by Jesus Christ that its nature and object were defined ; and it is only as his directions are attended to that it will be found a means of grace.

Prayer, as taught by human wisdom, is either the result of superstitious dread, or the effusion of some present passion, and can in neither instance tend to purify the heart. By human wisdom, addresses to the Deity have always been framed to suit some particular occasion or circumstances ; but the

the prayer taught by Jesus is suited to the wants and circumstances of all mankind. This is, indeed, a distinguishing feature in all the institutions of the Gospel.

From the beginning of the world, it has so happened, that the ever-fluctuating tide of time has, in all societies, gradually effected such changes, as to render the laws and rules that were necessary and proper at one period, unnecessary and improper at another. Ceremonies that have, at the time of their institution, appeared the perfection of wisdom, seem in after-times ridiculous and absurd. But though human wisdom must have discovered this, human pride has ever interposed to prevent any use from being made of the discovery; and consequently all laws and ordinances promulged by human authority

authority have been issued as if they were to be in force for ever.

The law of Moses, instituted by God for a particular purpose, was declared to be only for a season, and as introductory to that law of holiness which was to be everlastingly binding. By our Saviour that law of holiness was published; and as it was intended, so it was adapted for every age and every nation. Calculated to endure while the sun shall hold his place in the firmament, while the planets of our system shall continue to run their course around his radiant orb, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall never pass away." By no revolutions of time can they be made obsolete, by no changes in the state of society can they be rendered useless. While man continues what he is, a being compounded of soul and  
body,

body, having appetites and passions, intellect and affections capable of being called forth by their proper objects, the institutions of the Gospel shall continue to be effectual.

Such of the precepts of human wisdom as do not in process of time become useless, are, whenever they descend to particulars, circumscribed in their use; for they are adapted to the condition either of the rich or of the poor, of the young or of the old. It is the precepts of Jesus Christ alone that speak to every heart. In prosperity and in adversity, in grief and in joy, in youth and in age, they are still found applicable to the present situation and circumstances; a certain proof that they are founded upon such a knowledge of the nature of man, as could only be obtained by Him who made him.

I shall endeavour to illustrate this  
obser-

was then *the fashion*. They who sought popularity prayed; but they prayed that they might be seen of men! “ Verily, verily,” said our blessed Lord, “ they have their reward!” Their reward they certainly had. They desired popularity, and they obtained it; but it became a snare for their souls!

Our Saviour, whose doctrines are not only directed against all actual transgression, but against all those corruptions of the heart which are the sources of self-deception, as well as of hypocrisy, while he pointed out the abuse of prayer, described in most explicit terms its advantages. “ Ask, and it shall be given you; “ seek, and ye shall find; knock, and “ it shall be opened unto you. For “ every one that asketh receiveth; “ and he that seeketh findeth; and “ to him that knocketh it shall be “ opened.

“ opened. For what man is there of  
“ you, whom if his son ask bread will  
“ he give him a stone? or if he ask  
“ a fish will he give him a serpent?  
“ If ye, being evil, know how to give  
“ good gifts to your children, how  
“ much more shall your Father which  
“ is in heaven give good things to  
“ them which ask him! *Therefore,*”  
(observe, I pray you, the force of  
this connecting adverb, as it evidently  
implies, that on no other terms  
can we expect our prayers to be  
heard,) “ *Therefore,* all things  
“ whatsoever ye would that men  
“ should do to you, *do ye even so to*  
“ *them*; for this is the law and the  
“ prophets.”

The difficulty of acting thus is denoted in the passage immediately following, where this line of conduct is described, metaphorically, as the path which leads to life, “ strait and  
“ narrow;”



“ narrow ;” in opposition to that pride and uncharitableness, described as the wide gate and broad way that leadeth to destruction.

Pride and selfishness are represented throughout the Scriptures as the great enemies of our salvation : humility and benevolence as the genuine offspring of a true and lively faith. All the institutions of the Gospel offer us assistance in combating the former, and tend to implant and cherish the latter in our hearts. Prayer had by the Pharisees been so far perverted, as to have become a mean of augmenting the spirit of pride and self-importance. It was by Jesus Christ erected into a barrier against the incroachment of each sinful passion ; and by its operation in purifying the affections, to render us heirs of the kingdom of God.

The direct instructions which our  
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Saviour

Saviour has given us upon this subject, must surely be deemed worthy of serious attention by those who profess to believe in him. With the form of words in which he instructed us to pray, we are all familiar ; but perhaps that very circumstance may sometimes prevent their making a due impression upon the mind. Let us examine this divine composition, and we shall be sensible that every petition it contains is in such perfect unison with all he taught, that it may be considered as an epitome of his doctrines ; calculated to impress them upon our hearts, and to call us to a perpetual remembrance of the spirit which they inculcated.

When we contemplate the works of God, and behold such astonishing proofs of power and greatness, we are apt to shrink in dismay on recollecting our own comparative insignificance,

significance, and to say with the Psalmist, " Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that thou visitest him !"

By our Saviour we are taught to look to the Eternal Governor of the universe with other sensations than those of doubt or terror ; encouraged to address ourselves to him, not as to a sovereign removed from us by the awful state of inapproachable majesty, but as *a father* ; an appellation so endearing, so connected with the ideas of love and confidence, as to speak peace to the trembling heart, and tranquillize the timid soul.

In addressing him as *Our Father*, we are reminded of our fraternal connection with the whole human race. We are reminded that our situation in society makes no difference in his sight,

sight, but that " as a father pityeth his  
" children, so God pityeth all who love  
him." Experience assures us how  
necessary it is to have such reflections  
often forced upon us, in order to  
check those passions, which the too  
great value we place upon the things  
of this world has a perpetual tendency  
to enflame.

Those who are doomed to eat the  
bitter bread of dependance, or to  
drink of the cold cup of poverty, find  
it difficult to look with a benevolent  
eye on the possessors of wealth. They  
feel indignant at the pride which they  
deem inseparable from riches, without  
reflecting that it is from pride their  
indignation springs.\*

The

\* As an illustration of this truth, many  
apt quotations might be given from the works  
of the sages of antiquity and the moralists of  
our own times. The consciousness of mental

The distinctions of society are not only essential in a political, but necessary in a moral point of view, as means of exercising and proving our virtue. Whatever tendency they may have

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superiority especially makes it difficult to bear with patience "the proud man's contumely," nor is it possible to forbear sympathising in the feelings that are thus excited. Who can peruse the indignant effusions of the Scottish peasant Burns, without giving way for the moment to a sense of injustice? How deeply must he have felt when he thus expressed himself!

Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust !  
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost !  
Descend, ye chilly smothering snows !  
Not all your rage, as now united, shews  
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,  
Vengeful malice, unrepenting,  
Than heaven-illumin'd man on brother man bestows !

Even in the peaceful rural vale,  
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,

How

have to inspire the feelings of selfishness or malevolence, and that they have such tendency cannot be disputed, the spirit of devotion provides a remedy for the evil. Inspired by it, the owner of the rich domain, and the rustic hind who labours it, meet with feelings of mutual benignity before the throne of grace, and look up with equal trust and confidence to that Heavenly Father, to whose parental care they are alike indebted ; on whose parental bounty they alike depend. Raising their hearts to Hea-

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How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,  
 (The parasite empoisoning her ear,)  
 With all the servile wretches in the rear,  
 Looks o'er proud property, extended wide,  
 And eyes the simple rustic hind  
 A creature of another kind ;  
 Some coarser substance, unrefined,  
 Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile  
 below !

ven, the seat of his abode, and the scene of their future destination, they anticipate the hour when the transient distinctions which separate them shall be annihilated, and upon the altar of grace sacrifice all the unhallowed passions which these distinctions might have inflamed.

Nor is it only the separation occasioned by external circumstances, that this address, if made with becoming seriousness, will remove: it will alleviate the spirit of prejudice, and open our hearts to candour and charity. In addressing God as *our* Father, we cannot presume to circumscribe the comprehensive term, so as only to apply it in our minds to those who agree with us in opinion, or who are connected to us by the bonds of amity or friendship. No. *Our* Father is likewise the father of those who oppose us; of those who think ill of us,

us, and who are prejudiced against us. In repeating these words we pray for them as for ourselves. We entreat for them an equal degree of mercy; and by uniting in their supplications, acquire the restoration of that benevolent sympathy, which, without the application of such means, would have been for ever lost.

In expressing our reverence to the name of God, we recognize all the Divine attributes, and profess our desire to render that homage universal, by spreading the knowledge of his holiness, so that he may be worshipped by every heart. And by this profession we bind ourselves to do all in our power to enlighten others, and to honour the name of God by the sanctity of our lives and the sincerity of our devotion.

In praying that the kingdom of God may come, we at once acknow-  
1 3
ledge



ledge the supremacy of the Divine government, and profess our allegiance to the Divine Ruler, whose reign shall be the reign of justice, peace, and truth. We therefore, by this expression, engage to be the subjects of that kingdom, and to advance its speedy establishment, by our firm adherence to the principles which distinguish those of whom it is composed. If this engagement is made with sincerity, it is hardly possible that it can do otherwise than influence our conduct. If it does not, every solemn utterance which we give to this petition shall bear witness against us.

“Thy will be done on earth as it  
“is in heaven.” By this explicit  
declaration of submission to the Divine will, we declare our resignation to the Divine decrees, and our perfect reliance upon the wisdom of Providence.

dence. We resign ourselves, and all that is dear to us, to be guided and governed by the will of our heavenly Father; and pray that all may be equally disposed as we are to do his will, and to be governed by his directions. To that Sovereign will, we leave the disposal of all the circumstances of our lot: but, to shew that our dependence for the support of life is solely placed on his goodness, we supplicate him for what is necessary to its immediate preservation. We supplicate in the name of all: "Give us this day *our* daily bread."

That sustenance, in whatever circumstances we are placed, we acknowledge as his gift. And are we not bound thus to acknowledge it? However liberally God may have provided for us in the abundance of things of this life, are not the events of life, and life itself, in his disposal?

Can wealth insure to us a continuance of our daily bread? Or is it not in the power of God to deprive us of the wealth in which we trust? Let us then, with gratitude and trust, look up to the Giver of all good for whatever is necessary to the comfort of our existence; and while in the name of all our brethren we beseech the Universal Parent for our daily bread, let us remember that we are bound to do all in our power to render the prayer effectual. If, while we pray to the Almighty to supply the wants of all, we, to whom he has given a superabundance, supply the wants of none; if through carelessness or hardness of heart we permit those to perish for whom we beseech God to provide, our prayers will ascend to heaven as an offence, and our supplications as a mockery.

In the same breath in which we  
request

request the food that is essential to the preservation of the body, we implore that forgiveness of our sins, without which our souls must perish everlastingly. How are we entitled to this forgiveness? What plea have we to offer in support of our claims upon the Divine clemency? He who came to publish the glad tidings of salvation, and through whose merits we alone dare hope for forgiveness, has encouraged us to hope for it upon such conditions as will, if duly considered, be seen as a proper test of the sincerity of our repentance. He has taught us to ask of God to forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

Surely it cannot be in vain that this duty of forgiveness is thus repeatedly enforced upon us. In a point on which so much depends, it behoves us to ascertain with accuracy

the precise meaning of the terms we make use of. Our Saviour has so well explained it, as to leave no room for subterfuge or evasion. It is not only errors of judgment or sins of inadvertency that we here bind ourselves to forgive, but offences of whatever nature that have been committed against us. We are not merely to forgive them in words, but we are to forgive them from the heart, which must be so purified from every feeling of malice and resentment, as to retain no desire of revenge, no personal ill-will against those who have done or wished us evil. Until we have effected this, we cannot say we forgive as we hope to be forgiven; nor while we petition the throne of mercy for pardon, on conditions which we do not fulfil, can we hope to escape the punishment we so vainly with our lips attempt to deprecate.

While our intercourse with society is bounded within the precincts of friendship and affection, we are perhaps more likely to be led from the path of duty by our partialities than our resentments. There are who have passed on to a late stage of life, unconscious of having ever received a wilful injury from any human being; and who, from having their hearts perpetually exercised by the delightful emotions of gratitude and cordial regard, contract habits of universal goodwill and implicit confidence. Under such circumstances, what room is there for the operation of the vindictive passions? But even under such circumstances it is necessary to "keep the heart with all diligence," since this very unsuspecting confidence, should it ever be by treachery abused, will give to the crime of the offender so deep a colouring as to

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enhance the difficulty of forgiveness. In such seasons of trial, he who knows the heart, and witnesses all its struggles, will doubtless take pity on our weakness. Nor are we, either by our Saviour's precepts or example, taught an utter insensibility to the treatment we receive from others. How pathetically did he lament over the obstinate infatuation of his deluded countrymen! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

It is not, therefore, sufficient that we do not feel ourselves under the immediate influence of malice or revenge. We must cultivate and cherish dispositions with which they are incom-

incompatible, We must take care that the spirit which is in us be the spirit of love, of charity, and peace ! Such affections will be accompanied by humility ; and humility, conscious of the weakness and frailty of human nature, will earnestly implore not to be led into temptation.

To beseech our heavenly Father to exert his almighty power to preserve us from temptation, while we resolve on our parts to run into every temptation that offers, and not only so, but to solicit temptations from which we might have been by our situation exempted, is such palpable absurdity, as, did we reflect upon it, would render us contemptible in our own eyes. Can it then escape condemnation from God ? Let us not flatter ourselves by such delusive hopes. If we entreat God to preserve us from temptation,



tion, we must evince our sincerity by carefully shunning all that leads to it. It is only as far as we are conscious of the integrity of our motives, that we can presume to expect the assistance of Divine grace, either to direct or to restrain us. While we determine to cherish the tempter in our hearts, in vain do we bend the knee to God, and with our lips invoke his holy name, saying, "lead us not into temptation!"

In beseeching God to deliver us from evil, we again recognize him as the sovereign disposer of events; we again profess our belief in the perpetual exertion of that ever-active wisdom, power, and beneficence, to which, when spoken of collectively, we give the name of *providence*; attributes which, in the concluding sentence, we again acknowledge and adore.

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Such is the serious and solemn purport of that address to the Deity, which is so often repeated by rote, as if it were a mere string of words, without either sense or meaning. It may be thus repeated through life without producing any effect upon the conduct. But let the heart and understanding be both engaged in it, and it will be found impossible regularly to offer up this prayer to the Almighty, without experiencing the influence of that Holy Spirit which breathes in every line. The heart that is thus turned to God will require no excitement to make frequent use of the glorious privilege of addressing itself in prayer to Him who is able to grant to the uttermost every request. Let us, however, be careful that the requests we make are such as we can hope to be presented by  
our

LETTER IX.

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**I** HOPE I do not vainly flatter myself in believing that my dear Lady Elizabeth will have so far penetrated into the scope of my arguments, as to perceive that prayer must, upon the principles I have endeavoured to unfold, be a certain means of improvement. The grace of God was never sought in vain. If we use the means, he will not fail to favour us with that Divine assistance, which, though  
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( 185 )

knows the sincerity of the heart from which they proceed! May you all be protected by his providence, enlightened by his wisdom, and at length received into his glory!

Adieu!

him to make the Author of our salvation perfect through suffering.

Were the change that took place in the nature of the promises revealed in the New Testament duly considered, it would not only reconcile us to the apparently dark dispensations of Providence, but teach us to rejoice in the firm assurance that all will work together for good to those who love God.

The rites instituted by Moses were all calculated to excite faith in the promises of God, as they were either memorials of the fulfilment of those which had already been accomplished, or types of those which were still the objects of hope and expectation. The rites appointed by Jesus Christ were instituted for a similar purpose, and in every respect adapted to the end proposed. By them we are reminded how fully, how graciously all the promises made  
to

to our fathers by the prophets have, in the coming of the Messiah, been fulfilled. In them we have an assurance given, that the promises of grace here, and of glory hereafter, published in the Gospel, to all true believers, shall be no less punctually accomplished. Nor are they only calculated to increase our faith and to excite our hope, but to purify our desires, to regulate our affections, and to strengthen our principles, so as to enable them to resist temptation. This is especially the case with regard to the sacrament of our Lord's Supper, instituted as a memorial of our Saviour's death ; but let us not imagine that the sacrament of baptism has ceased to be to us of any importance, and that it is to be regarded in no other light than that of an established custom.

Baptism was from its first institution

tion an initiatory ceremony. The converts to Christianity, whether they had been Jews or Pagans, made a solemn profession of their acceptance of the terms of salvation offered by Jesus Christ. It was, on the part of the baptized, a declaration of faith, and a promise of obedience. It was on the part of God, (represented by his ministers,) a ratification of the promises made by our Redeemer, of which the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost formed an essential part: and as the Almighty had in former times condescended to give to Abraham, to Moses, and the prophets, some immediate token, which should be to them, and to their descendants, and to all who heard of it, a certain proof that the remoter promise should in like manner be accomplished; so he now did to the fathers of the Christian church. After the

the death of our Lord, the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was, on the administration of baptism, bestowed in such a manner as to afford, through the evidence of the senses, a convincing proof of the miraculous interposition of Divine power. Compare the accounts you find of this in the Acts of the Apostles with the passages I formerly referred to in the Old Testament, and you will perceive a very striking correspondence. The sensible operation of the Holy Spirit exhibited in the miraculous gifts bestowed upon the first converts, was, like the miracles of former times, vouchsafed for a special purpose. In establishing the faith of those who were witnesses of it, that purpose was accomplished; for God, who formed the mind of man, knew it to be so constructed, as to be susceptible of conviction from the evidence of credible



dible, witnesses, and that the impression received from testimony was little less forcible than that made upon the senses.

The ceremony of baptism is still, however, to be considered as an essentially important institution; reminding all to whom it has been administered of their imperfections and their privileges, of the miseries inherent to human nature in this world, and the influence by which they are to be overcome. Though the manner of its administration has varied with the change of circumstances, and children may in infancy receive this seal of admission into the Christian church, the nature of the institution remains unchanged.

The advantages which are to be derived from the knowledge of our having been thus early devoted to God, by means of an engagement  
solemnly

solemnly entered into in our names, are great and manifest ; and much is it to be regretted that they are not more frequently reflected upon, and more zealously enforced. We see so many proofs of the powerful effects produced by strong and early impressions, that little doubt can be entertained of the consequences that attend them. Ask and inquire of your friends whether any instance can be produced, of a child's having had the honour of a royal sponsor, and remaining ignorant of and insensible to the honour that had been thus conferred. Or, as it is always safer to select our authorities from the dead than from the living, you may, in Johnson's biography of the poets, read the life of the celebrated author of the *Night Thoughts* ; a man of indisputable piety, genius, and learning ; but who, notwithstanding the endowments of

his mind, the virtues of his heart, and the excellence of his views, was the victim of ambition. Unfortunately for him, he had been presented at the baptismal font by the reigning queen; and the honour which had thus been conferred upon him by his royal sponsor,—an honour concerning which he had been early and well instructed,—took full possession of his mind. To this circumstance, which connected all his ideas of happiness with court-favour and protection, we may fairly trace that desire of preferment which harassed his spirits, and gave a mortal wound to his peace.

If an impression so powerful can be made by the knowledge of an honour conferred by a fellow-creature, can we doubt that, if an equal share of pains were taken to instruct us in the nature of those hopes and privileges of which we are made partakers

in baptism, they would not likewise have an influence over us? Were we to be made sensible, from the first dawn of reason, that we had by this ceremony been devoted to the service of God, and admitted as candidates for immortality, as heirs of the promises and partakers of the blessings purchased by the Redeemer of mankind, could it fail to awaken our hopes and elevate our views?

It is truly melancholy to observe how little this is attended to. An institution commanded by the Son of God to be observed in all nations, and which was sanctioned by signs and wonders, and which is to us a seal of the promises of grace, is either considered as a mere form attached to the habits of our country, in the ceremony of giving a name, or converted into an instrument of superstition. It is not thus that you have

been taught to think of it, nor is it thus that it will be thought of by any of my little friends : I hope and trust the conviction with which I endeavoured to inspire them, of their having been presented in baptism to that good and gracious Being who bestowed all the happiness they so liberally enjoyed, will never be obliterated. But on you, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, I depend for renewing and strengthening the impression. On you the religious instruction of your brothers and sisters will most probably devolve. The ascendancy which you have already obtained over their tender minds, renders the task an easy one ; and how can you employ that ascendancy in a way so delightful, so glorious to yourself, as in conducting those who thus love you to the gates of Heaven ?

All that was in baptism engaged

for us by others, we in the sacrament of the Lord's supper deliberately ratify. We renew the pledges of faith and the promise of obedience, and make a solemn profession of our acceptance of the terms of salvation. These terms imply repentance of our sins; sincere and hearty resolutions of amendment; thankfulness to God for the assurance that our sincere repentance will be accepted of, through Jesus Christ, in lieu of that perfect and unsinning obedience of which our frail natures are incapable; and a determined purpose of sacrificing every selfish and vindictive passion.

This sacrament affords a salutary aid to human weakness, and by the exercise which it gives to all the benignant affections, is calculated to increase our own happiness, and to render us instrumental in promoting the happiness of society. I hope I

shall be able to render this yet more evident by some farther considerations; but before we proceed so far, it may be proper to take a view of the circumstances which attended the institution of this Divine ordinance.

Unable as we are to comprehend the ways of God, or to penetrate the mysterious plans of his Divine government, we need only exercise our reason to perceive, in all that he has unfolded of it, a unity of design, a correspondence, and harmony, by which it is distinguished from all that proceeds from man. In displaying the progress of revelation, I have been at some pains to direct your attention to this circumstance, as thinking it of much importance to religious principle: and I am persuaded that an examination of the concluding act of our Saviour's ministry, will  
tend

tend to enforce and illustrate all that I have advanced.

Nor shall I make any apology for the casual repetition of observations already made; for though inadmissible in a work of taste and imagination, repetitions are, in a long chain of argument, not only useful, but necessary in giving firmness to the connecting links.

We have seen that the multiplied ceremonies of the Jewish law were intended for a specific purpose, and that they were eminently adapted to answer the end for which they were instituted. In the coming of the Messiah, they were rendered no longer necessary, and were consequently abolished; but as human nature remains the same, and as man in his present imperfect state is incapable of complete abstraction, and stands in need of having his ideas connected and



embodied, if I may so express myself, by means of sensible objects, the Divine Goodness provided, in the institution of the sacrament, such an aid as was in every way suitable to our wants.

By the ceremony of the passover, which was instituted on the eve of their departure from Egypt, the children of Israel were reminded of their having been miraculously rescued from a state of slavery and subjection, and put in possession of the land promised to their fathers.

By the sacrament of the Lord's supper this ceremony was superseded; but however injudiciously it may have been sometimes explained, the correspondence between them is no fanciful illusion. It was evidently in allusion to the pascal lamb, that our Saviour was so often hailed as "the Lamb of God; the Lamb that  
" taketh

“ taketh away the sin of the world.” As that lamb was slain immediately preceding the event which gave to the descendants of Abraham an assurance of the accomplishment of all that God had foretold and promised, it might with propriety be considered as an emblem of Him whose death was so immediately followed by that resurrection to eternal life, which is the accomplishment of every promise, and the seal of every dispensation!

It was in the contemplation of his own immediate sufferings and death, that our Lord dispensed the cup of life to his disciples; giving them at the same time such an explicit intimation of the approaching event, as filled their hearts with sorrow. It was in vain that he then assured them that their sorrow should be turned into joy. In vain that he set before

them the efficacy of his death, and the certainty of his rising from the grave to a state of immortal glory, in which they and all true believers should to a certainty participate. His words penetrated but did not convince their hearts. They mourned as those who had no hope : nor would any thing short of sensible demonstration have been sufficient to render faith and hope triumphant over death and the grave.

God did not require of human nature a faith beyond its powers. He who in all preceding revelations condescended to give such sure pledges of the truth of his promise, as destroyed the possibility of doubt, gave, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a glorious and satisfactory testimony to the truth of the promise of salvation. The sacrament of the supper was henceforth to be considered as a  
pledge

pledge of immortality. It seals the promise of a joyful resurrection to all who zealously endeavour to render themselves the objects of that promise, and who prove their acceptance of it by the necessary qualifications. What the dispositions are which we must of necessity cultivate, we learn from the precepts of our Lord ; and, lest these should not have sufficient efficacy, they are enforced by his example.

The first circumstance taken notice of by the Apostle Paul, in his account of this ordinance, is exceedingly striking. He dwells particularly upon the period chosen by our Saviour for instituting this perpetual memorial of his dying love — “ On the night “ on which he was betrayed ! ” — What a humiliating memento of the depravity of human nature ! what a glorious proof of the benevolence of the

malice, vain-glory, and every modification of hatred and resentment, must appear to us in their proper lights, as passions which it behoves us to sacrifice on that altar which is purified by the perpetual incense of peace and love. And what do we thus sacrifice, but those corrupt passions which are the sources of our greatest misery? "Come unto me," said our compassionate Lord, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest!*"

Another essential advantage results from the institution now under consideration, as by giving a salutary interruption to those trains of thought which are perpetually excited by objects of sense, it breaks the spell which binds us to the world. A constant intercourse with society, all must acknowledge to be inimical to reflection.

reflection. Pleasure dissipates our thoughts, care absorbs them; and every object that engages our affections, be it what it may, in so far as it thus engages them, tends to render us forgetful of our future destination. How apt are we, when happy, to forget that this is not the land of promise! How prone, when under the pressure of sorrow or disappointment, to look still to the world which has deluded us for relief! In this ordinance, a merciful provision is made for our retrieving the consequences of these infirmities. We are by it reminded, that if Christ died, he died that we might live. We are taught to reflect upon the nature of the promises which were sealed by his death, and ascertained by his resurrection. We are thus as it were compelled to raise our minds from the world, and to follow him into those regions

regions whither he is gone to prepare a place for us.

And is it not evident, that contemplations so full of hope and joy must necessarily elevate and purify our hearts and our affections ?

Let us then, with becoming gratitude, adore that Divine wisdom, which so admirably adapted the means to the ends, as to render institutions, apparently simple, productive of consequences so extensively beneficial. Let us, in language appropriate to the occasion, “ with angels and arch-  
“ angels, and with all the glorious  
“ company of heaven, laud and magnify his glorious name.” And, while the praises of our hearts ascend, let us remember, that he whom we thus acknowledge hath said, “ It  
“ is in vain that ye call me Lord,  
“ Lord! if ye do not the things  
“ which I say.”

LETTER X.

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HAVING, as I hope, succeeded in my design of presenting you with a general view of those important truths which have been conveyed to us by revelation, I must now beg your patient attention to a few remarks on the nature and spirit of the precepts of the Gospel.

Hitherto I have anxiously avoided all occasion of offence. I would still avoid it. But I should not be acting up to the friendship I profess, and  
which



which in my heart I feel, if I were, from apprehensions of incurring any one's displeasure, to disguise, or palliate, or conceal, aught that concerns your real interest.

I must then boldly declare to you, that the precepts of the Gospel are, in many respects, adverse to the precepts and manners of the world; and that the pleasures of the world are held forth in it as corrupters of the heart and snares for the soul.

To you, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, who are by your birth placed in a situation, where the temptations alluded to are generally thought to put forth all their strength, the subject becomes peculiarly interesting.

Why all are not placed in situations equally advantageous for the practice of virtue, is a fruitless question. As well might we inquire why the Laplander freezes under the inclemency

mency of a polar winter, while the African pants beneath the fierce heat of a burning sun? Both are parts of the scheme of Providence, placed beyond our comprehension. We may still carry on the analogy a little farther, and observe, that differently as they are situated in respect to climate, the Laplander and the African have each the means of subsistence within their reach; and that though the shivering savage of the north procures with difficulty his scanty meal, he enjoys in peace his unenvied banquet, and bounds over his hills of snow without the fear of meeting with any lurking serpent. For the inhabitants of softer and more luxuriant climes, many enemies lie in ambush. To say nothing of the beasts of prey which prowl around, or the swarms of venomous insects which cause a perpetual irritation, how often  
does

does it happen that the very air breathes pestilence, and that the breeze which refreshes the soul is filled with the poison of death!

How similar to this is the comparative state of the rich and of the poor! But as there are few who would prefer the rigours of a northern winter, with all its security, to the luxuries of a warm climate with all its dangers; so likewise are there few who would prefer a state of poverty to that of wealth; a clear proof that the desire of happiness is stronger than the dread of misery.

The desire of happiness is indeed the most powerful motive to exertion. And by him who is the God of nature, no principle which he had originally implanted was ever afterwards destroyed. The desire of happiness had been implanted in the human breast, at the time when we  
are

are told in Scripture, "God saw  
 "his work, and behold it was very  
 "good!" \*

But though "God made man up-  
 "right, he sought out many inven-  
 "tions." All these inventions were  
 in search of happiness, but never  
 was the search crowned with ac-  
 knowledged success. The most obvi-  
 ous and common course was to seek  
 for her in the indulgence of those  
 appetites and passions which man has  
 in common with the brute creation.  
 But here invention was soon found to  
 be of very little use. It is the intel-  
 lectual part of our nature that is  
 alone susceptible of improvement.  
 The pleasures of sense are in their  
 nature transient; and if we would  
 prolong their existence, it must be by  
 adding something from the mind. A  
 drove of pigs may probably have as  
 much pleasure in a feed of acorns

\* Genesis, i.

as ever any right honourable glutton enjoyed in devouring the nicest daintty. If the latter has any superiority to the former, that superiority must be derived from sources purely mental. It is therefore evident, that the pleasures of sense cannot, by all the ingenuity of man, be converted into means of real and permanent happiness. Neither is it in the gratification of any selfish passion that true happiness is to be found, though it is in these that it has, in all ages of the world, been sought for with most unremitting ardour.

Experience declared the search to be fruitless; and philosophy exhorted her votaries to relinquish the vain pursuit. But religion forbids the pursuit to be relinquished, and proclaims that happiness is no chimera; that it has a real existence; and that it will to a certainty be found by all who take

ensnared by them, and taught us how to avoid the danger, by fixing our hopes and our desires on immortal felicity.

In the New Testament we find no rules of external discipline; no statutes of prohibition: but we find all the enjoyments which this life affords described as they really are, transient and unsatisfactory; not adapted to satisfy and not intended to engross the soul. It is there represented as the Christian's duty to obtain such a complete control over his passions and inclinations, as may prevent them from ever gaining such an ascendancy as may render him forgetful of his high destination. Nor is this limitation confined to the objects of sense. Power, and wealth, and fame, the chief objects of pursuit among the children of this world, are by the gospel of Jesus deprived of their pre-eminence, and reduced to a level with

all temporary enjoyments, sinking into nothing when put into comparison with those that are eternal. "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul;" or "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The love of praise, a more generous principle than the love of riches, is subject to the same restrictions, and represented as a passion extremely dangerous, unless where it is subordinate to the desire of the approbation of God.

The love of power is described by our Saviour as a heathen principle, utterly incompatible with the spirit of those doctrines which he inculcated, and of which he in his life set the brightest example. "Ye know," said he, "that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and that they that are great, exercise authority."

“ authority. But it shall not be so  
“ among you : but whosoever will be  
“ great among you, let him be your  
“ minister ; and whosoever will be  
“ chief among you, let him be your  
“ servant : even as the Son of Man  
“ came not to be ministered unto, but  
“ to minister, and to give his life a  
“ ransom for many.” \*

To persons who are taught to place their chief happiness in this world, power, and honours, and riches must necessarily be the primary objects of pursuit ; but in the minds of those who look beyond this world for their happiness, they will be reduced to a level with all other temporary enjoyments, viz. considered as things comparatively insignificant.

Here again we perceive how admirably the doctrines and the precepts

\* St. Matt. xx.



of our Divine Master support and elucidate each other. In the same point of view in which all temporal things would be placed by a true and lively faith, they are placed by the positive precepts of the Gospel. We there find that all the gratifications which can be enjoyed with innocence, are to be enjoyed with thankfulness. Wealth, and power, and reputation are to be valued as means of doing good to others, and of affording an exercise to those benevolent affections which we are commanded to cultivate. But they are not to be rested in as a chief good; neither are we to esteem ourselves or others on account of the degree in which we or they happen to possess them. We are to estimate these advantages, as they are estimated in the sight of God, and as they will be estimated by ourselves hereafter.

They

They must know very little of their own hearts, and have paid little attention to the actions of others, who do not see that the difficulty of thus justly appreciating the advantages of worldly enjoyments, is much enhanced by their possession. Hence arises the danger of a situation that is elevated in the eyes of the world. The pleasure that arises from the consciousness of pre-eminence, is too dear to pride to be easily relinquished. Our Saviour foretells this in language so forcible, as to have struck his audience with dismay. The circumstance is remarkable; and as it affords a forcible illustration of what I have just advanced, I shall give you a more particular account of it.

Amongst the numbers whose hearts bore witness to the divine authority of our Saviour's doctrine, was 'a certain ruler,' a man of distinguished

rank and opulence, of high reputation, and, as it appears, of no mean proficiency in the polite art of flattery. His address to Jesus was couched in that sort of equivocal language which admits of an interpretation beyond the strict and literal meaning of the words: "*Good Master*, what shall I "do to inherit eternal life?" Our Lord, who never countenanced a departure from the simplicity of truth, rebuked his insincerity. "Why callest thou me good?" And as to the question of what duties he was to perform, he referred to his knowledge of the ten commandments. These, this great man declares, he had strictly kept, even from his youth up! The declaration seems to have been made with no small degree of self-complacency; and he no doubt expected to receive from Jesus, that tribute of applause, to which he considered himself

self entitled, and to which, as a great man, he was probably well accustomed. But instead of flattering him with hopes of inheriting eternal life by a mere adherence to the letter of the precepts, he shews him, that unless the desire of immortal happiness is so strong as to enable the mind to relinquish for it all worldly enjoyments, it will be of no avail. As a test of this, he desires him to give up that fortune from which he derived his consequence, to distribute his earthly treasure to the poor, that he might have treasure in heaven, and at the hazard of incurring the ridicule and displeasure of his countrymen and companions, to profess his belief in the Messiah, and to follow him. Alas! this son of prosperity had not strength to make the sacrifice. But he did not relinquish the hopes of eternal life with

careless levity and indifference : “ He  
 “ went away sorrowful, *for he was*  
 “ *very rich.*” And when Jesus saw  
 that he was very sorrowful, he said,  
 “ How hardly shall they that have  
 “ riches enter into the kingdom of  
 “ God ! For it is easier for a camel  
 “ to go through a needle’s eye, than  
 “ for a rich man to enter the king-  
 “ dom of God ! And they who heard  
 “ it, said, Who then can be saved ?  
 “ And he said, The things that are  
 “ impossible with men, are possible  
 “ with God.” \*

With God alone are they indeed  
 possible ! And when we examine  
 the nature of the virtues which be-  
 long to the Christian character, we  
 shall be convinced, that without the  
 special assistance of Divine grace,  
 they must, in certain situations, be  
 so peculiarly difficult of attainment,

\* St. Luke, xviii.

as to reconcile us to the metaphor which at first view appears so incongruous. Nor let us be so far mistaken as to imagine that the possession of any of these virtues will be of importance to our eternal welfare; except in so far as they are of genuine growth. If they spring from mere worldly wisdom, they will avail us nothing. They are only to be deemed *Christian* virtues as they proceed from the Christian spirit, and as they exhibit the effects of that spirit upon the general character.

This may, perhaps, require explanation; but it may be very easily explained. Meekness and temperance are Christian virtues, but meekness is, in many instances, the result of a happy temperament; [and temperance, the effect of habit and of choice. Charity may proceed from ostentation as certainly as from bene-

ficence; and even truth, the least flexible of the virtues, may be nearly allied to pride, the most unconquerable of the vices.

The comprehensive view of the Christian character which I recommend to your attention, is not made up of minute and separate parts; it is one uniform display of love to God and man; of affections purified by the hopes of immortality; of a judgment which knows how to appreciate every enjoyment this world can offer according to its real value; and of a mind, which, in conquering the passions and corruptions that would ensnare it, has put forth all its strength. To raise the heart from this world, so as never to lose sight of those promises which the Son of God came to reveal, and to secure for us, we consider as extremely easy at the moment when we are withdrawn from the power of temptation.

temptation. But, as I observed to you with regard to the first principles of morality, there is not a passion in the heart which, if not zealously watched over, will not raise a cloud between us and those hopes, and lead us to forget that this is not the scene of our reward, or of our glory. It is upon this account, that we are taught by our Saviour, to set a strict guard upon those deceitful enemies of our eternal peace, which wage incessant war against the soul. But if instead of combating we encourage them ; if instead of endeavouring to subdue their power, we do all we can to increase its strength ; how hopeless must be our situation ! Whatever circumstances there may be in our lot which have a decided tendency to produce and to inflame these passions, must be considered as placing us in a state of peculiar danger, and therefore as demanding a  
peculiar



peculiar vigilance. Now I am afraid that we cannot even admit a doubt as to the tendency which the enjoyment of an uncommon portion of the things of this world has, in the point alluded to ; and this chiefly arising from the inevitable operation of concomitant circumstances.

A cursory view of the passions that are represented in Scripture as disqualifying us for the kingdom of Heaven, will serve to convince you of the truth of this remark.

Pride, the source of all the malevolent passions, is represented throughout the New Testament as incompatible with the spirit of the Christian dispensation : it opposes itself to every Christian virtue, and is inimical to the cultivation of every Christian grace. It is therefore, with great propriety, represented as the enemy of the soul : and it is an enemy no less  
deceitful

deceitful than inveterate ; for there is no describing the variety of forms which it assumes. It often lurks where least suspected, and converts even our very virtues into means of temptation. Whatever tends to increase our power, whether it be external or intellectual, personal or accidental, tends likewise to increase our pride. Nor is it by what augments our power as individuals that pride is only nourished ; for so insatiable is its nature, that it appropriates to itself enough to feed on from sources the most remote.

Whatever we can by any means contrive to connect with the idea of self, however slender the connection, is eagerly seized upon, and made use of to give enlargement to that idea ; for this is the invariable aim of pride. Hence arises all the eagerness of party. Hence the exaggerated importance  
given

given to the opinions that are adopted by the party we embrace: pride seizes upon all the power or influence which that party may acquire, and brings it home to the bosom of every individual of which it is composed, saying, "Lo! is it not thine own?" Nor does a consciousness of individual insignificance step forward to prevent the deception. Indeed, the more insignificant the individual, the more does it feel its want of that adventitious consequence which may at an easy rate be thus acquired.

I am sorry to say it, but truth obliges me to confess it as my opinion, that the spirit of party has owed most of its female champions to this very circumstance. The consciousness of weakness naturally inclines our sex to seek for aid from strength beyond its own; and did not pride interpose, this conscious-

ness would, under the Christian dispensation, lead to the happiest consequences: but, tempted by pride, we leave the safe course of humble duty, and boldly aspire to share in all the fame, and all the glory of some distinguished, or would be distinguished, party; and what we want in knowledge we make up in zeal. According as this party dictates, we applaud or we condemn. We embrace in the lump the opinions it espouses, and represent those who oppose them, not only as the enemies of our party, but as the enemies of God! and this perhaps on no better foundation than that they differ from us on points which we do not, nay, which we *cannot*, understand. If our capacity be very limited, and our ignorance be very great, we do not even wait to examine whether they really differ from us or no; it is sufficient that the

they have not enlisted themselves under the banner of our party. This infallibly excludes them from all share in our charity.

And is this the spirit of the Gospel? No. It is the effects of that pride with which the spirit of the Gospel is at utter variance.

The same unconquerable desire of giving an unnatural extension to our ideas of *self*, and which makes us anxious to grasp at every circumstance which can be turned to that account, induces us to consider all the wealth and power possessed by the family to which we belong, or to the friends to whom we are attached, as additions to our own importance. We even go back to the times that are past, and ransack the tombs of our ancestors for the same purpose, considering every discovery we make of their merit or grandeur, as adding something

something to ourselves. It is true, that when we are struck with any very evident incongruity between the apparent circumstances of any one, and the opinions they entertain of their own importance, it seldom fails to excite our ridicule.\* But were  
we

\* Family pride has within the last half century been so completely vanquished by the pride of wealth, that it is now only in the remoter parts of the kingdom to be found in its genuine state. An anecdote, which displayed it in colours sufficiently ludicrous, was lately related to me by a lady who frequently visited the island of Arran on the western coast of Scotland, of which the Duke of Hamilton is chief proprietor, and most of the inhabitants are of his name. Among these, an old couple, whose miserable hut bespoke the extreme of poverty and wretchedness, attracted the attention of my friend, and shared her bounty. On returning to the island, she found that the only daughter of these poor half-starved creatures had, during her absence, the good fortune to be very well married; and the  
first

we to permit ourselves to reflect more deeply, we should perceive, that the beggar who, while pining in all the misery of want, piques himself upon his high descent, is not in reality guilty of greater absurdity, than any human being, who is so far the dupe of pride, as to think highly of himself in whatever situation. The only

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first time she met the mother, she congratulated her on the circumstance. Janet, to her surprise, appeared extremely mortified. "Is your son-in-law not then so rich as has been reported?" asked the lady. "O yes, madam, he is very rich if that were all!" "Has he not then a good character?" "Oh, the best of characters! there's not a better young man in all Scotland — but for all that ——" "He does not make a good husband, I suppose." "A good husband! Why, madam, he doats upon my daughter! She may do any thing she likes. But still it's a marriage I never can be pleased with; for, after all, he is come of nobody!" "Who ever heard of a Duke Mackalloss!"

difference

difference is, that in the case of the proud beggar, our own pride does not permit us to sympathize; because it sees nothing in him of which it can hope to make a property, nothing that can add to its own stock. But with regard to the pride that is clothed in splendour, we are less willing to examine the basis of its pretences, than to turn them to our own advantage; and therefore we do not hesitate to pronounce them genuine, even in defiance of all that reason and religion have to urge.

Thus you must perceive that an elevated situation gratuitously offers to pride all the nourishment which is in an inferior station purchased at the expense of no small portion of labour and ingenuity; and at the same time, by affording gratification to the pride of others, is deprived of all that might  
give



give a salutary check to its impetuosity.

If pride naturally leads us to appropriate the power and influence of the party to which we are attached, as an aggravation of our own importance, the great are from infancy exposed to the force of this temptation. They are brought up and live in the bosom of a party; and of a party which they know and feel to have more power and more influence than any other. They know they may, as individuals, be insignificant, — nay, despicable; but that still they will share in the power and influence of their order. Surely this is a dangerous situation for beings who ought to have no trust but in God; no hope but in the mercies of a crucified Saviour!

How difficult to bring the pride  
that

that has thus been nourished into such subjection, as to render it possible for it thoroughly and truly to embrace the doctrine of the Cross! But let us remember, that though "with man " it is impossible, all things are possible with God."

LETTER XI.

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THE repugnance which I feel to proceed with this most difficult part of my task, is, I trust, a proof that pride does not instigate me to the undertaking. I have, indeed, so little pleasure in dwelling upon the dark side of any subject, that it is only a strong conviction of its importance that could have induced me to enter upon my present theme. But when I observe the zeal which is often displayed concerning passages in Scripture

ture that are merely subject of speculation, and which are so darkly expressed as to be of doubtful meaning; I should deem it inexcusable were I with lukewarm indifference to pass over what has by our Lord himself been positively and explicitly declared essential to salvation.

Were religious knowledge inevitably to produce religious principle, nothing more would be requisite than to point out to you the means of information. But your soul is precious in my sight, your interest is bound up in my heart, and therefore I cannot deceive you into such a fatal error, as that of believing that religious knowledge will entitle you to participate in the blessings purchased by the sufferings and death of the Son of God. He certainly has given us no authority to think so; but, on the contrary, has been at

infinite pains to set before us, in a variety of lights, the necessity of vigilant exertion and never-ceasing assiduity, in order to control and to subdue those passions which have their origin in an inordinate desire for the enjoyment of terrestrial good. It was seen by his infinite wisdom, that while these possessed the soul, it was impossible that the glad tidings of the Gospel should penetrate the heart.

Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light. He changed the nature of the promises that had hitherto been made by God to man; and instead of a reward in temporal things, propounded to his followers the reward of eternal glory. But if the desire of temporal good occupies the heart, to that heart the promise has been made in vain. Therefore did our Heavenly Instructor warn us  
 against

against all that has a tendency to lead us into this temptation. He desires us, at whatever expense of pain or mortification, to cut off the seductions that would ensnare our affections; assuring us, in the strongest terms, that we shall find it more profitable to endure any degree of temporal suffering, than to bring upon ourselves the penalty of never-ending woe.

In the number of these seductions he has placed all that tends to inspire pride and selfishness, and hardness of heart; characterising these as constituting the spirit of the world. It is with this world they connect all our ideas of happiness: and if our idea of supreme happiness is connected with earthly enjoyment, we must of course forego the happiness of heaven. Why should we permit ourselves to be so far imposed upon,

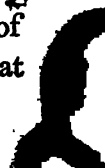
as to imagine that he could be deceived, who declared it impossible for us to serve God and Mammon!

If it is difficult for human nature to subdue that pride, which even amidst all the frowns of fortune induces us "to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think," how much must the difficulty be increased, when all we see and hear tends to favour the deception!

The preacher might speak ironically, who, in addressing a royal and noble audience, designated hell as "a place not fit to be mentioned before such a polite assembly;" but how often may we observe, that the anxious desire of avoiding offence, gives rise to the same sort of circumsppection, though not so honestly avowed. The consequence is, that there are few who have through life been exposed to this species of flattery,

tery, that have been able to form a just conception of their own real character. The truth never comes home to them; it never reaches their hearts. Knowledge they may indeed acquire from books: but the mind can only be strengthened by collision with mind: the prejudices that are never combated, will never be overcome, nor will strength be acquired for overcoming them. Hence it is that empirics of all sorts, enthusiasts of all denominations, have found it so easy to "lead captive "silly women," and that the patronage and favour of the great has so often been bestowed upon the worthless.

Humility and self-distrust are the result of that consciousness of imperfection which all must have, who compare their ideas of what they ought to be, with their knowledge of





what they really are. The Christian, who, in making this comparison, has his eye fixed upon the character of Him in whose life there was no blemish, must of necessity be humble. Every day and every hour affords him convincing proofs of his own weakness. He feels that his strength is from above; and while he with earnestness solicits the Divine aid, his breast glows with a lively sense of gratitude to Him who has given an assurance that it will be bestowed. By thus divesting himself of all ideas of his own inherent superiority, he throws down the bulwarks which pride endeavours to erect between man and man, and opens his heart to kindness and to charity.

But pride does not relinquish without a struggle the strong holds that are defended by arrogance and presumption. And how can they fail to be

be presuming and arrogant, who are taught to think that every thing in which they have an interest, is not only of importance to themselves, but of importance to others ; nay, of more importance than their own immediate concerns.

This appears so absurd, that it would not be believed, did not every day's experience convince us that it is so. Take the following instance : The poor man, who expends a great proportion of his slender capital in building to himself a humble cottage, and who perhaps bounds all his prospect of worldly pleasure to the cultivation of the little garden attached to it, has, we must allow, no less interest in his object, than the great man, who rears a magnificent palace, has in his. But let them be brought together in the intercourse of society, and see which would expect the

other to enter with any degree of sympathy into the object of his interest. The poor man may rejoice in his heart over the excellence of the straw he has procured for thatching his lowly roof, and may pique himself not a little upon the ingenuity with which he has contrived the cupboards in his parlour and the pantries in his kitchen ; but would he think of expatiating on these in the great man's presence? No ! He would be conscious that he would excite no interest. The great man, on the contrary, would expect to be listened to with earnestness on any theme in which his gratification was concerned. And he would be listened to, however tiresome the detail, however uninteresting the circumstances !

Hence we may observe, that the most important of the advantages which society affords, is to persons  
in

in a very elevated situation, in a great measure, lost. Where equality prevails, much is learned from observing the effects which our sentiments or stile of conversation produces upon others: the range of pride is by this circumscribed within narrower limits, arrogance is repelled, and "heedless rambling impulse learns to think."

If these observations are founded in truth, and I think it is not by those who have seen much of the world that they will be disputed, it must follow, that an elevated situation is little less unfavourable to the cultivation of the understanding than to the discipline of the heart. Nor do the many illustrious instances which we have before us, of the intellectual vigour that has under all these disadvantages been attained, offer any contradiction to the asser-

tion; as they only prove that there are no obstacles which may not be conquered by superior minds. And what so likely to confer this superiority as the spirit of religion? By fixing the attention upon circumstances that are in their nature unchangeable, it elevates the soul above the reach of vulgar flattery, and teaches it to aspire at higher honours than can be conferred by the breath of man.

The religion which is to accomplish this, I have endeavoured to lay before you. If it makes any impression upon your heart, you will not think it sufficient that you act in such a manner as to avoid all occasion of slander; you will endeavour to act as becomes a candidate for immortal glory. It is therefore not merely the dispositions which will procure you applause and respect in this world,

world, that I have been at pains to inculcate; but the dispositions which are to be the test of your faith and your obedience, and which are on that account necessary to procure you an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

These dispositions are often described in the New Testament under the general terms of love or charity. In our Saviour's sermon on the Mount, they are particularized under different heads; and by St. Paul they are, under the denomination of charity\*, beautifully delineated. But, both by our Saviour and his Apostles, they are invariably represented as implying the complete triumph of the benevolent affections of our nature over the passions of pride and selfishness.

\* 1 Cor. xiii.

I have slightly, and indeed I have but slightly, touched upon the circumstances which enhance the difficulty of subduing pride, to those who are born to the inheritance of rank and splendour; and it will not require much consideration to perceive, that the same circumstances which are favourable to the introduction of pride, cherish the spirit of selfishness. They are indeed so blended, as to be not easily distinguished. They equally indispose us to sympathize in the feelings of others; and they operate with equal force in fixing our hearts and affections on terrestrial things. Pride enlarges the idea of our own importance, by exaggerating the importance of every thing that we can connect with the idea of self, however remote the affinity: selfishness bestows a fancied right to procure our own gratification, even at the expense

expense of misery to others. Pride blunts the feelings of humanity; selfishness destroys them.

In all the intermediate classes of society, selfishness, as well as pride, meets with so many checks, and is so universally opposed and reprobated, that even by the common intercourses of life it must be in some measure subdued, or at least restrained. Whatever calls our attention from ourselves to others, whatever excites the generous and tender sympathies, and awakens us to a sense of the sorrows and miseries of our fellow-creatures, tends to diminish the power of selfishness; and it is in the intermediate classes of society that opportunities for these exercises of the benevolent feelings most frequently occur.

In this respect, as in some others which I have already pointed out,  
 I the



the opposite extremes may often be observed to meet. They lie under similar disadvantages: and accordingly we find, that it is in the very highest and the very lowest orders that the most glaring instances of complete selfishness are produced. The attention of the high and the low vulgar is equally engrossed by the idea of self: but there is this difference, that among those who are obliged to exert every faculty to procure the means of existence, other objects are excluded from the mind by necessity; in those who revel amid superfluity, they are excluded by pride. In the one instance the feelings lie dormant; in the other they become extinct. The lady of quality, who, after describing the shocking accident which had befallen her son's tutor, gravely deplored the event, not as a misfortune to the poor man,

man, but as an inconvenience to her son, made as open a display of her feelings, as did the mistress of a country inn where I once happened to change post-horses. Just as I drove from the door, the horse on which the postillion rode dropped down dead; his whole weight upon the poor boy's leg, who called out that it was broken. A crowd instantly assembled, and all seemed earnest to extricate the poor lad from his unpleasant situation, and anxious for his relief: all but the landlady, who kept wringing her hands, exclaiming, "My horse! my horse! my pretty horse! He cost me five-and-twenty guineas at the last fair! Oh, my pretty horse!"

Now though the lady and the inn-keeper were each actuated by the same selfish principle, and though it operated in each to the exclusion of the

the sympathies of humanity ; we must allow that in the case of the latter it admitted of most excuse. In both it was *openly* displayed, and for the same reason, because neither had been accustomed to regard the impression which their conduct made upon others.

In the higher ranks of life this impression is not easy to be perceived, the laws of politeness and the respect due to rank obliging those with whom they converse to conceal their feelings. But in truth, the impression it makes is little regarded. The heart that is filled by pride and selfishness is callous to contempt.

On this account it is that extreme meanness is so often found the attendant of extreme pride. People who depend upon their character for the respect which is dear to all, are restrained from acts of meanness by  
being

being obliged to model their conduct to generally received opinion; but those who derive all the respect they wish for from their external circumstances, are deprived of this salutary check. They are consequently often mean in the extreme; acts of meanness by which I should deem myself everlastingly dishonoured, some persons of very exalted rank might not, perhaps, conceive derogatory to their character, nor would perceive it, if in situation alone they placed all dependence for respect.

Even the first principles of truth and justice, meet in the higher circles with obstacles which render a strict adherence to them a matter of the greatest difficulty. That I may escape the odium of intentional exaggeration, I shall present you with a picture of refined and polished manners, as drawn  
by

by one who was born and bred in the scenes which he describes.

“ It is,” says the Earl of Orford, “ in  
“ drawing *refined* or *affected nature*,  
“ that consists the extreme difficulty  
“ of painting what is called *high life* ;  
“ where affectation, politeness, fashion,  
“ art, interest, and the attentions  
“ exacted by society, restrain the sal-  
“ lies of passion, colour over vice, dis-  
“ guise crimes, and confine man to an  
“ uniformity of behaviour, that is  
“ composed to the standard of not  
“ shocking, alarming, or offending  
“ those who profess the same rule of  
“ exterior conduct. Good breeding  
“ conceals their sensations, interest  
“ their crimes, and fashion legitimates  
“ their follies. Good sense forms the  
“ plan, education ripens it, conversa-  
“ tion gives the varnish, and wit the  
“ excuse. Yet under all these dis-  
“ guises

“ guises nature lets out its symptoms.  
“ Protestations are so generally the  
“ marks of falsehood, that *the more*  
“ *liberally they are dealt, the more*  
“ *they indicate what they mean to*  
“ *conceal*. Good company have the  
“ same passions with low life, they  
“ have only changed the terms and  
“ modulated the display. Good breed-  
“ ing is, no more than bank bills,  
“ *real measure* ; but it increases the  
“ national fund of politeness, and is  
“ taken as current money.”

The national fund of politeness !  
Alas ! to what a melancholy state must  
they be reduced, who place their all in  
such a fund ! Who exchange the solid  
treasure of sincerity and truth, for the  
paper currency of compliment ! Yet  
so just is the representation given by  
this noble Earl, of the manners of the  
society in which it was his lot to mix,  
that it is impossible to read it without  
subscribing

subscribing to its truth. It is at least only by those who have lived at a distance from the world, that it will be called in question.

The difficulty of practising sincerity, where sincerity is held in so little estimation, as in some instances, to expose those who adhere to it, to derision and contempt, must doubtless be very great. But put the derision of fools in the balance against the reproaches of conscience, weigh the contempt of the wordly-wise against the condemnation of your God, and the difficulty is reduced to nothing. If we remain after doing this the willing slaves of the world, we must content ourselves with such rewards as the world has to offer, and take it in the fictitious currency to which it has affixed an imaginary value : but “ if we embrace the truth the truth shall set us free.”

From

From the view which I have given of even but a part of the obstacles which the envied distinctions of this world place in the way of the candidate for immortal glory, we must perceive that it is by no common degree of vigilance, by no ordinary labour of the mind that they are to be overcome. But, thank God, my beloved child, they are to be overcome! Though great, they may be surmounted; though strong, they are not invulnerable.

The religion of Jesus Christ, if it be received into the heart, will render you superior to your situation. It will teach you how you may derive from it the means of real happiness; for it will teach you to contribute to the happiness of others. It will teach you to derive from it the most solid glory — the glory of doing good!

On every side you are surrounded  
by



by proofs, that each of the disadvantages, to which rank and affluence expose those who possess them, will yield to exertion and perseverance. You perceive that "all that splendor, "all that wealth can give," does not necessarily preclude the highest cultivation of the mental powers; and that all the Christian virtues may be obtained and practised, even in the midst of the allurements of temptation.

"With God all things are possible." The religion which came from God, if it penetrates the heart, will convert the means of corruption into instruments of advancement, and change the curse into a blessing.

If the spirit of the Gospel be imbibed and cherished, the spirit of pride and selfishness must be annihilated. Then, and not till then, will the influence which situation gives become a  
source

source of pure delight, of thankfulness, and joy.

The good that may be done by a judicious use of fortune is very great, but it is nothing in comparison of the good that may be done by example. The latter is incalculable; it extends not only to those whom you immediately influence, but to those who are influenced by them; so that it is in reality without limits.

Consider then, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, that you are in all probability destined to a situation in which your example may be the means of promoting the virtue and happiness of thousands, and tens of thousands of your fellow-creatures; and when you consider it mingle trembling with your joy! For never fail to remember, that as you may be the means of extending happiness and virtue, so likewise, by giving way to the seductions

tions of the world, and the corruptions of your own heart, you may be the means of spreading the contagion of vice and misery.

Let this awful consideration induce you to cling for support to the "rock of ages." Let your opinion of your own state be determined, not by the applause of the world, not by the flattering testimony of partial friends, but by the word of God. Seek there for your real character; seek there for instruction, for consolation, and for hope. The instruction, the consolation, the hope, that corresponds not with the word of truth, reject; reject with firmness, as you value your eternal welfare!

Take a comprehensive view of the duties that are required of you, and you will find that they do not demand a resignation of the ground you occupy, nor a dereliction of any of the  
external

external circumstances which give it apparent elevation. You are, on the contrary, to fulfil to the utmost the duties of the post that is assigned you : and if it be one which particularly exposes you to the attacks of the enemy, you are only to exert the greater diligence to guard against surprise.

Your acquaintance, whatever your real worth may be, will at all events be courted. But remember the opposite descriptions of the persons by whom it will be sought after, according to the species of distinction you enjoy. If you place your glory in the adventitious circumstances which may be considered as purely accidental, to these circumstances you will be indebted for the incense of flattery, and the ever-pleasing offerings of respect and adulation. But from whom will you receive them?

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From

From the selfish and the vain. From those who attach themselves to you with no other view than to add to their own importance; who, when they find it their interest to sacrifice you at a higher shrine, will not only forsake you, but expose and exaggerate your weaknesses and follies, and deride you for having been the dupe of their insincerity. You will live and die without having known the comfort of a real friend. If you, on the contrary, acquire and exercise the dispositions and virtues which can alone recommend you to the favour of Heaven, you will yourself be the real object of attraction; and all adventitious circumstances, however splendid, will be thrown in the back ground: they will be forgotten, though not despised, by those who will then be solicitous of your favour, for you will have the esteem and regard

gard of the estimable and the wise. You will then experience all the sympathies of friendship, all the endearments of affection. You will be looked up to in sorrow, as the consoling angel, whose smiles are effectual to cheer the drooping heart: you will be consulted in perplexity, as the oracle on whose dispassionate decision the doubtful may place confidence. Your relations will rejoice in you as their honour and their pride. Your brothers and sisters will love you as their dearest earthly good; their guide, their adviser, and their friend.

And now, my dearest love, the painful task remains of bidding you a long — perhaps a last farewell! The promise which I made of doing you *all the good in my power*, I have endeavoured to accomplish to the utmost. I have done it as unto God,  
and

and not unto man : and if the sincerity of the motive finds acceptance in his sight, I shall not go without my reward. May my prayers be heard, and it will be given in the shape of a blessing upon my instructions.

With regard to the younger objects of my anxious solicitude, their tender age forbids the hope that much of what they learned from me will remain with them. Still I cannot but flatter myself, that the dispositions to benevolence, to charity, and to gratitude, which I zealously endeavoured to inspire, may retain their influence in the heart. "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon ; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build  
 " upon

“ upon this foundation, gold, silver,  
 “ precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;  
 “ every man’s work shall be made  
 “ manifest. — It shall be revealed with  
 “ fire ; and the fire shall try every  
 “ man’s work, what sort it is \*.” May  
 all they learn, from whatever source  
 it is derived, be able to stand the  
 test of this awful trial ! May they  
 be preserved from every evil way, and  
 from every evil work ; and, increas-  
 ing in virtue as they advance in  
 years, prove ornaments to society and  
 a blessing to their country !

Should these Letters reach their  
 hands, when the hand that writes  
 them has mouldered into dust, though  
 they may serve to recall some endear-  
 ing memorial of the tenderness of my  
 affection, it will appear to their minds  
 like a distant dream. But you, my

\* 1 Cor. iii.

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dearest



dearest Lady Elizabeth, you never can forget me. Our paths through life lay far asunder. Mine leads to the quiet and peaceful home, which for your sake I was induced to leave, to relations endeared by every virtue, to the society of faithful, long-trying friends, and the soothing intercourses of esteem and affection. These are the blessings which Providence has poured into my cup of life; nor let me forget to add the zest that is given them by the enjoyment of leisure and tranquillity.

To your view, more dazzling prospects are about to open. The charm of novelty gives brilliancy to every scene; and the enchantments of hope give to every picture of the future the stamp of enjoyment. In the horizon of life, my sun has nearly gone down; the lengthened shadow warns me of approaching twilight. With

you it has but just begun to rise;  
and very important are the hours still  
between you and its meridian height.  
But the shades of night must descend  
on all. May they be succeeded by the  
splendour of a more glorious day!  
Then may we again meet in joy! a  
joy unsullied, unclouded, uninter-  
rupted: a joy that shall be eternal!

Amen! and farewell.

THE END.









**This book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building**

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